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## 'Cannabis industry is growing'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
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REPORTER

» **16 commercial cannabis licenses issued, 9 pending applicants**

A total of 16 commercial cannabis licenses have already been issued in the CNMI: eight marijuana producers, six marijuana retailers, one marijuana processor, and one marijuana lounge licensee, according to CNMI Cannabis Commission managing director Mikiotti Evangelista.

See **CANNABIS** on Page 4



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

CNMI Cannabis Commission managing director Mikiotti Evangelista, center, provides an update on the current state of the Commission during a meeting with members of the House of Representatives Cannabis Committee on Tuesday. Also in the photo are other Commission officials. From left to right are executive secretary Natasha Palacios, permitting and licensing division inspector Erik Basa, managing director Evangelista, acting chair Juan Iguel, and vice chair Journie M. Hofschneider.

## Kilili urges Mayorkas to move forward on EVS-TAP



Sablan

Mayorkas

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) has urged U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to move forward on the rule-making process for the CNMI Economic Vitality &

See **KILILI** on Page 4



## Kingman refiles penal summons against Torres

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Assistant attorney general James Kingman leaves the Superior Court courtroom following a hearing on former governor Ralph DLG Torres' case.

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
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REPORTER

With the Superior Court not pressing ahead with the arraignment of former

governor Ralph DLG Torres in his new contempt case due to the improper service of the initial penal summons, assistant attorney general James

See **KINGMAN** on Page 4



CHRYSTAL MARINO

After completing their courses, 2023 graduates of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute pose together with their completion certificates after the graduation ceremony last Tuesday at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

## 67 graduate from NMTech

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**  
chrystal\_marino@saipantribune.com  
CORRESPONDENT

A total of 67 students of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute have successfully

See **NMTECH** on Page 4

CHRYSTAL MARINO

The Culinary and Baking and Pastry students before the 2023 graduation ceremony of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute last Tuesday at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.



## INSIDE



### BUSINESS

E-Land Group will be unveiling its first NC Picks outside Asia with the grand opening of the warehouse-type discount store tomorrow in Garapan.

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### NATION

The number of immigrants to the U.S. jumped to the highest level in two decades this year, driving the nation's overall population growth.

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### WORLD

The Israeli army has raided and detained staff at two of the last functioning hospitals in Gaza's north.

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# Local

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The U.S. District Court for the NMI in Gualo Rai.

## RNV, others are summoned in case alleging labor violations

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES  
kimberly\_esmores@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

A penal summons has been issued for RNV Construction, Best Deal Merchandise, Coreplus Construction, and Ruel Villacrusis pursuant to a lawsuit filed by former employees in the U.S. District Court for the NMI, alleging these companies violated the Fair Labor Standards Act.

RNV Construction, Best Deal Merchandise, Coreplus Construction, and Villacrusis signed and filed waivers of service of summons yesterday, pursuant to a lawsuit filed by former employees. Essentially a waiver of service or summons means the defendants in a case have waived the issuance of a summons and voluntarily enter the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed by former employees of the defendants: Prospero A. Armia, Nemencio Q. Deleon, Giovan Malazarte, Ian R. Alcoseba, Ranie E. Celestial, Rudy B. Naraja, and Victor P. Friginal.

The plaintiffs, who were employed by the companies in question at some point dating back to 2019, allege in their suit that their em-

ployers failed to pay them the prevailing wage and overtime wages.

The plaintiffs, who are demanding a jury trial, wants payment for applicable overtime compensation for all hours worked in an amount to be determined at trial.

The plaintiffs also want the court to order the companies to pay them their overtime compensation for all hours worked beyond 40 hours in each work week in an amount to be determined at trial; order payment of all unpaid services, tasks, and work done for defendants; and order the defendants to pay liquidated damages, plus prejudgment interest, and attorney's fees and costs.

Lastly, the plaintiffs want the imposition of sanctions and penalties against all the defendants to deter future violations.

The first cause of action in this case was alleged failure to pay overtime wages in violation of the FLSA.

According to the lawsuit, the defendants claimed they were never paid overtime wages and claimed their employers "illegally deducted" money from their pay.

## CUC schedules road closures in Garapan from Dec. 21 to Feb. 6

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to notify the public of scheduled road closures in portions of Garapan, starting from today, Dec. 21, 2023, to Feb. 6, 2024. See additional information below:

■ Road closure dates: Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023, to Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024 (Note: Road closures will occur on various dates within this period)

■ Road closure times: Between 7:30am and 4:30pm (time may vary depending on the level of groundwater or tidal level)

■ Areas affected: Portions of Coral Tree Avenue between Micro Beach Road and CPL. Derence Jack Road, including Date Street, Coconut Avenue, and Palm Street.

■ Purpose: The road closures will allow CUC's contractor to replace and rehabilitate sewer lines and manholes along the roads of the areas affected.

Detour signs will be displayed to inform the traveling public of restrictions. CUC's contractor will also be providing detailed directions regarding accessing the commercial and residential properties along the project areas.

The Garapan Sewer Mains and Manholes Replacement Project is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act. The project's objective is to establish a more reliable sewer system, involving the decommissioning of the old sewer line, and its replacement with PVC pipes.

CUC wishes to reassure the public that there will be no disruption in sewer services for its customers. Motorists are advised to drive slowly and exercise caution when in the project areas for the safety of the crew. For more information, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282 or monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates. (CUC)

Hafa Adai  
**Saipan Tribune**

# What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest

OPEN TO KIDS AGES 6 TO 12

Thank you to all the kids for your  
wonderful artwork submissions!

**AWARDING CEREMONY**  
December 21, 2023  
SAIPAN TRIBUNE WILL CONTACT THE WINNING ARTISTS

**ANNOUNCEMENT**  
Winners will be announced on our **Special Christmas Supplement**  
on December 22, 2023. Stay tuned!

Thank you to our  
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AND THANK YOU TO THE GENEROUS INDIVIDUALS WITH HEARTS OF GOLD  
WHO SHARED THEIR BLESSINGS TO OUR YOUNG ARTISTS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON!



## OPA gets flood of questions about solicitations for Christmas parties

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

The CNMI Office of the Public Auditor is reminding everyone in the government that the Government Ethics Code Act of 1992 generally prohibits any government agent from soliciting or receiving gifts from any private entity whom they regulate or obtain goods or services from.

Dora Deleon Guerrero, who is the temporary public auditor, issued the reminder on Friday after OPA, according to her, received numerous inquiries and complaints about potential violations of CNMI law regarding public entities soliciting for donations from private entities to support holiday parties and other office activities/functions.

The Ethics Code Act also generally prohibits private entities from providing gifts to any public entity who has regulatory authority over the donor, said Deleon Guerrero in her letter addressed to CNMI government branches, departments, agencies, public corporations, and autonomous agencies.

She said the purpose of these prohibitions is to ensure that decisions of government

entities are free from actual or perceived conflict of interest.

She said public solicitations for private donations may run counter to the stated purposes of the Ethics Code Act and may inflict unwarranted pressure upon private entities to contribute.

The Ethics Code Act seeks to develop public confidence in persons holding public office, to ensure official acts are free of the influence of undisclosed private or business interests, and to enhance the dignity of public offices.

Deleon Guerrero said these objectives are undermined when public entities seek contributions from the private sector.

Moreover, she said, a private organization may not feel free to decline a request for donations from a public entity for fear future business opportunities or reputation may suffer as a result.

Deleon Guerrero said the appearance of impropriety may arise even in the absence of direct regulatory authority over the private entity.

She noted that a provision of the Ethics Code Act requires gifts received by a Commonwealth agent on behalf of the

See OPA on Page 4

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**buzzed driving is drunk driving**

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[www.dps.gov.mp](http://www.dps.gov.mp)

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# MTEC, MVA: Imagine your favorite ‘green’ space

In line with this year’s school outreach theme, “Green Spaces, Memorable Places/Kâmpun Betdi, Kâmpun Rikuetdu/Llingil Leyil Walúwal,” Marianas Tourism Education Council and Marianas Visitors Authority are inviting students to put themselves in the shoes of a tourist enjoying the Marianas’ natural environment.

MTEC and the MVA shared their message on the impor-

tance of tourism with students at Franscico M. Sablan Middle School last Dec. 12, at William S. Reyes Elementary School last Dec. 18, and at Kagman Elementary School last Dec. 19. As a majority of today’s travelers rank enjoying nature as one of their top expectations, students were invited to take a moment and reflect on their own favorite “green” space.

“The No. 1 activity visitors have said they want to do when visiting the Marianas is to enjoy our beautiful nature, and the students know just how beautiful our islands are,” said MTEC board member Catherine Perry. “We want to instill in these bright young minds the importance of planting and preserving trees, forests, community gardens and other

green spaces for both our visitors and future generations to enjoy. Investing in keeping Saipan green is investing in our tourism economy.”

The outreach team aims to engage 4th graders, 7th graders, and 10th graders this year on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota with information and activities highlighting the Marianas’ primary economic driver, how it impacts their lives, and

ways students can support tourism even at a young age.

The presentation also includes an overview of programs and activities of the Marianas Visitors Authority, including its annual signature events like this month’s 19th Annual Christmas in the Marianas and the upcoming Rota Marathon in January.

The presentations were made by Perry, MTEC board chair Vicky Benavente, and MVA Community Projects specialist Jack Aranda.

Other MTEC board members are vice chair Glenn

Policare (Kanoa Resort), secretary Martin Duenas (MVA), treasurer Larissa Larson, Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero (Northern Marianas College), Larry Lee, Naomi Nishimura (CNMI Public School System), Gordon Marciano (PDI), and Dr. Yunzi Zhang (Northern Marianas College).

Schools interested in starting a MY WAVE Club to engage students with tourism may contact Aranda at [jaranda@mymarianas.com](mailto:jaranda@mymarianas.com) or (670) 664-3200 for more information. **(PR)**

## NMTECH

From page 1

completed their programs and were presented their completion certificates in a ceremony at the Pedro P Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center last Tuesday.

The students were from the Construction, Automotive Technology, Culinary Art, and Baking & Pastry classes at NMTech. There were nine graduates in automotive technology, five from the institute’s newest course, Baking and Pastry, 10 in culinary arts, and 42 in construction.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Joe C. Guerrero, who was the event’s keynote speaker, encouraged the students using the advice that the school’s original founder, Tony Pellegrino, had given

him, “Don’t be afraid to fail.”

Guerrero assured the graduates and faculty that the Saipan Chamber of Commerce will be one of their greatest advocates as they continue to promote and work toward hiring local residents and diminishing the need for contract workers.

“You have made an excellent choice to pursue your passion, and pursue training opportunities to better yourself and your family. ... You now have skills and training,” he added.

In his remarks, NMTech board member Zenn Tomokane told the graduates that the benefits of a trained education do not stop at the first job.

“Continuing education is crucial to the workforce and I encourage all of you to keep learning and... become the best in your field. With dedi-

cation and hard work, you all have the potential of becoming great leaders,” he said. “All the technical disciplines represented here...require an unique blend of creativity precision and commitment to serve, lead, and build.”

One of the graduates of NMTech’s Construction: Electrical program, Joelourd Cepeda, is thankful for having completed the entire electrical course. “It took a long while. I’ve been here since 2017. I’ve been a student of NMTI and now NMTech, so it’s been a long ride but it’s been good.”

Now that he’s completed all four courses, Cepeda looks forward to gaining more experience in his job at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. “I’m looking forward to one day becoming a certified lineman for the CNMI and, yeah, I want to continue

my knowledge...,” he added. “In electrical courses you can learn so much from books, but it really comes down to what you go through in your experiences. You don’t just master this in like a year or so. It takes years of understanding how the trade works, working with it, understanding the safety of it, so it’s going to take time but I will pursue further knowledge of it later and, if I can, go off-island.”

Dellina Lieto, who completed Culinary 1 and 2, as well as her course in Baking and Pastry, told reporters she feels great. “I’m just happy I did both classes. It was a lot of hard work and sweat but it’s going to be fun and joyful in the end,” she said. “My favorite part of the house is the kitchen so I enjoy cooking and baking; it’s my passion,” she said.

## CANNABIS

From page 1

That translates to \$75,400 in total licensing fees every year, according to Evangelista, who gave an update on the status of the commission to members of the House of Representatives Cannabis Committee on Tuesday.

He said that, as of Sept. 30, 2023, there were 59 employees in the CNMI’s cannabis industry, compared to just 17 a year and a half ago.

“So we are seeing growth,” he said.

On top of that 16 commercial cannabis licenses issued, Evangelista said they also have nine pending applicants—three marijuana producers, two marijuana processors, and four marijuana retailers.

amount in fiscal year 2023, at \$118,275.

As for the budget appropriated to the commission through fiscal year 2024, Evangelista said it’s \$113,007 for three full-time employees, including himself. For the board’s compensation, it’s \$275,000 per year for five board members.

Evangelista said they’ve had a few challenges so far but the main issue is the lack of funding.

“Today we are halfway up that hill. The funding is available from revenue generated solely by the cannabis industry,” he said.

Evangelista said they need the Legislature’s help in appropriating enough funds so the commission can operate as a fully functioning regulatory agency.

## KINGMAN

From page 1

Kingman has now refiled the summons in a do-over of the process.

The refiled penal summons, which Kingman submitted yesterday, now contains the information that charges Torres with contempt and misconduct in public office.

According to the new penal summons, Torres must appear before the Superior Court on Jan. 22, 2024, at 9am.

“If you do not appear, an application may be made for the issuance of a warrant for your arrest,” states the summons.

Last Monday, Superior

Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas decided not to take action on the penal summons against Torres in the new contempt case filed against him due to the improper service of the summons. Specifically, the judge found that the summons was served without the case information informing Torres of the charges against him. That means it was not effectuated properly pursuant to CNMI rules of law and procedure.

Back in October, Kingman filed the new suit charging Torres anew with contempt over his failure to comply with a legislative subpoena last December 2021. This is the suit Torres is facing pursuant to this new penal summons.

Aside from contempt, Kingman also charges Torres with misconduct in public office for failing to appear in compliance with the legislative subpoena.

According to Kingman, failure to appear in compliance with a subpoena is in violation of the Commonwealth Code; if found guilty, Torres could be fined by not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned by not more than one year, or both.

This is not the first time the Office of the Attorney General filed a contempt suit against Torres, but that initial charge was dismissed in August 2022. Judge *pro tem* Alberto Tolentino’s order granted, in part, and denied, in part, Torres’

motion for the withdrawal or disqualification of the OAG as a prosecutor. It was in this order that the judge dismissed the contempt charge against Torres.

Specifically, Tolentino found that chief solicitor J. Robert Glass, the head prosecutor in the criminal case against Torres, may have been exposed to privileged and confidential information that prevents Glass from prosecuting Torres for contempt, therefore the charge was dismissed.

As for the motion to disqualify Glass from prosecuting Torres for the other 13 charges stated in the complaint, Tolentino found no conflict and denied the former governor’s motion.

## KILILI

From page 1

Security Travel Authorization Program for Chinese tourists.

In a letter to Mayorkas last Friday, Sablan said the CNMI EVS-TAP could further the Commonwealth’s goal to work with him and DHS to ensure the integrity of U.S. borders—no matter where tourists or other arrivals to the islands come from.

“Tourism to the Marianas is still emerging from the pandemic quarantine period, but in the long run

our islands must reestablish what has traditionally been the mainstay of our economy,” he said.

The proposed EVS-TAP will allow prescreened People’s Republic of China nationals to travel to the CNMI without a visa under specific conditions. This was one of the recommendations of the 902 Consultation special representatives of then-president Donald Trump and then-CNMI governor Ralph DLG Torres last May 15, 2019—the creation of EVS-TAP as a subprogram of the Guam-CNMI

Visa Waiver Program.

Sablan said that beginning in the spring of 2020 and continuing through fall of this year, the Unified Agenda of Federal Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions has reported a rule under development to implement such 902 Consultation special representatives’ recommendation.

Although only the abstract is available to him, Sablan said he writes to support the proposed rule in concept and to urge DHS to complete work quickly to allow publication for full consideration.

He noted that the rationale for the EVS-TAP is well documented in the special representatives’ report.

Sablan said in implementing Public Law 110-229, Mayorkas’ predecessor, Janet Napolitano, recognized the importance of maintaining a nascent flow of tourism from the PRC to the Marianas. In November 2009, he said, Napolitano used the secretarial authority of humanitarian parole for this purpose.

A longer version of this story is available at [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com)

## OPA

From page 3

Commonwealth be promptly reported to the Public Auditor and the Department of Finance, who shall then add the gift to the inventory of Commonwealth property.

Deleon Guerrero said the solicitation and gifting prohibitions in the Ethics Code Act seek to not only prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest, but also to ensure gifts received on behalf of the Commonwealth are accounted for and are used for a public purpose.



# Glimpses Media expands portfolio with two dynamic radio stations

**BARRIGADA HEIGHTS, Guam**—Glimpses Media, a locally-owned and distinguished media company headquartered in Guam, proudly announces the latest additions to its extensive portfolio with the inclusion of two prominent radio stations, Power 98 FM and Wave 105 FM.

This strategic move not only marks a significant milestone in the company's growth but also demonstrates its commitment to providing diverse and comprehensive media offerings to the Marianas and Micronesia.

With nearly 50 years of dedicated service to the community, Glimpses of Guam, Inc. has evolved into a multi-faceted media entity, solidifying its reputation as a leader in business journalism, lifestyle and community publications, and now has expanded further to encompass two audio visual radio broadcast stations.

Power 98 FM is a well-established Top 40 station focused on connecting with the island's youth, fostering a celebration of homegrown talent, and staying attuned to the vibrant cultural pulse of the region.

Wave 105 FM, a newly introduced station, will serve as the go-to destination for news and music resonating with our island community. Boasting a lineup of familiar voices, such as Patti Arroyo and other notable community figures, Wave 105 FM aims to become a trusted source for insightful content and engaging programming.

Glimpses Media's commitment to excellence extends beyond radio, with the *Marianas*

*Business Journal* and *Guam Business Magazine* remaining as the premier business publications in the region. The company is also renowned for recognizing captains of industry and businesses through such prestigious awards programs as the upcoming *Guam Business Magazine* Executive of the Year, the List of Bank of Guam ASC Trust Top Companies in Micronesia, among others, firmly establishing its role as a pillar of the business community.



Fong

The *Guam Guide*, a recent addition to its digital portfolio, is an online guidebook that showcases the uniqueness of Guam's culture and lifestyle for visitors and newcomers alike.

Marcos Fong, managing director of Glimpses Media, expressed enthusiasm for the company's expansion, stating, "We are thrilled to diversify our media offerings with the addition of Power 98 FM and Wave 105 FM. These radio stations, along with our familiar print and digital titles, allow us to create a deeply immersive and enriching experience for our audience."

As Glimpses Media continues to grow and evolve, its core values of journalistic integrity, wholesome entertainment, and community engagement remain steadfast. The inclusion of Power 98 FM, Wave 105 FM, and The *Guam Guide* exemplifies the company's dedication to providing a diverse and dynamic media landscape that reflects the rich tapestry of the Mariana Islands and the Micronesian region. **(PR)**

## FOG to enhance wastewater system efficiency

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. wishes to inform the public about the Fats, Oils, and Grease Program, effective Sept. 19, 2023. This program includes all food service establishments and residential properties connected to wastewater sewer systems islandwide.

The primary objective of the FOG Program is to conduct thorough inspections of FSEs' grease traps and interceptors, aiming to minimize grease buildup in the island's wastewater collection systems. In compliance with regulations outlined in the CUC Title 50 § 50-20-210 and BECQ Part 600 § 65-120-670, this reflects CUC's commitment to upholding environmental standards and ensuring the longevity of the wastewater infrastructures.

The FOG Program not only focuses on inspections but also serves as an educational platform for FSEs. It emphasizes the critical importance of regular maintenance of grease traps and interceptors. Additionally, this program enforces the installation of grease traps/interceptors and ensures adequate sizing for all FSEs not currently in compliance.

CUC appreciates the cooperation of the public to ensure the smooth implementation of the islandwide Fats, Oils, and Grease Program. By doing so, the community collectively contributes to the preservation of the island's environmental well-being and ensures the sustained efficiency of wastewater collection systems.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact CUC Customer Service at (670) 664-4282 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. **(CUC)**

VINCENT J. SEMAN, CNMI Bar No. F-0361  
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Saipan, MP 96950  
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E-mail: vjseman@semanlaw.com

Attorney for: Petitioner Gill Blas Condominium Owners Association

### IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

GILL BLAS CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,	CIVIL CASE NO. 23-0023
vs.	NOTICE OF EXECUTION SALE
T.R.C. LTD., et al, Defendants.	

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 4, 2023, the undersigned will sell at public auction to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, to satisfy a judgment entered in the above-captioned case in favor of Plaintiff, all of Defendant T.R.C. Ltd.'s interest in and to real property situated in Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, described as:

Remaining leasehold interest expiring on October 11, 2044 in Unit #201 of the Gill Blas Condominiums, situated on that portion of Lot No. 003 D 19, as more particularly described in the Gill Blas Sublease and Residential Sales Agreement on File at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office as File No. 96-1156

**1. Date, Time and Place of Sale.** The sale, open to the general public (including the Plaintiff and Defendant), will be on Friday, January 5, 2024, at 10:00a.m. at Seman Law Offices, LLC, 2nd Floor, JET Building, Gualo Rai, Saipan, CNMI.

**2. Inspection of Property.** The sale property is located in Garapan, Saipan and may be inspected upon request prior to the public auction. Arrangements for inspecting the premises can be made with Vincent J. Seman from Seman Law Offices, LLC, (670) 323-2115. Failure of the bidder to inspect the property will not constitute grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the bidder.

**3. Warranties and Covenants.** The property listed in this Notice will be sold in its current condition, "as is". The sale will be held without any warranties or covenants whatsoever, whether express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability and/or title for any purpose whatsoever, all of which warranties and covenants are hereby expressly disclaimed. Neither the undersigned nor Plaintiff shall be liable for the quality of the property listed for sale, or for any fault or defect in the description thereof. Buyer shall not be entitled to rescission, damages, or any other remedy on account thereof.

**4. Conduct of Sale.**  
a. RESERVE. The sale will be held with reserve. Disclosure of the reserve price on the property offered will be at the sole discretion of the undersigned but will in no case be less than the outstanding judgment, with costs, in favor of Plaintiff.  
b. ADVANCE BIDS. Bids may be submitted in advance for the property listed. The highest of such advance bids will be the opening bid for the property at the public auction. Advance bids must be submitted in writing and delivered to Vincent J. Seman, Esq., Seman Law Offices, LLC, Second Floor, JET Building, P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950.  
c. DISPUTES. The undersigned may resubmit for public auction any property listed in this notice if a dispute arises as to any bid thereon.  
d. DEPOSIT. Immediately after a sale is consummated, the successful bidder shall pay the undersigned a deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price. Payment shall be in cash or certified check. The balance of ninety percent (90%) must be paid to the Plaintiff, in care of Seman Law Offices, LLC, Trust Account, within three (3) days from the date of sale, in cash or certified check, if the balance is not paid, Plaintiff will retain the deposit as liquidated damages, and may again offer the property for sale.  
e. MEMORANDUM OF SALE. If requested by the undersigned, a successful bidder must sign a Memorandum of Sale immediately after the sale of the property is struck at auction.

**5. Court Approval Required.** The sale of the subject property is subject to approval by the Court. The Auctioneer and Plaintiff make no warranties or promises with respect to Court approval of the sale, including but not limited to the time in which such approval shall be granted. No delay in the granting of Court approval shall be grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the successful bidder. The successful bidder will be promptly notified if and when Court approval is granted.

**6. Change of Terms and Conditions of Sale.** The undersigned reserves the right to change any of the terms hereof by announcement, written or oral, made before the public auction or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause, will be binding on all bidders by constructive notice. Plaintiff expressly reserves the right to withdraw the property listed in this Notice before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted, or to request an adjournment of the sale, without notice, at any time before any specific property is sold.

Dated this 8th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Vincent J. Seman  
VINCENT J. SEMAN  
Attorney for Plaintiff

VINCENT J. SEMAN, CNMI Bar No. F-0361  
Seman Law Offices, LLC  
JET Realty Bldg., Suite 204  
P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168  
Saipan, MP 96950  
Telephone: (670) 323-2115  
E-mail: vjseman@semanlaw.com

Attorney for: Petitioner Gill Blas Condominium Owners Association

### IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

GILL BLAS CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,	CIVIL CASE NO. 23-0023
vs.	NOTICE OF EXECUTION SALE
HARUMI SHIRAGA, et al, Defendants.	

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 4, 2023, the undersigned will sell at public auction to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, to satisfy a judgment entered in the above-captioned case in favor of Plaintiff, all of Defendant Harumi Shiraga's interest in and to real property situated in Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, described as:

Remaining leasehold interest expiring on October 11, 2044 in Unit #202 of the Gill Blas Condominiums, situated on that portion of Lot No. 003 D 19, as more particularly described in the Gill Blas Sublease and Residential Sales Agreement on File at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office as File No. 96-1156

**1. Date, Time and Place of Sale.** The sale, open to the general public (including the Plaintiff and Defendant), will be on Friday, January 5, 2024, at 10:00a.m. at Seman Law Offices, LLC, 2nd Floor, JET Building, Gualo Rai, Saipan, CNMI.

**2. Inspection of Property.** The sale property is located in Garapan, Saipan and may be inspected upon request prior to the public auction. Arrangements for inspecting the premises can be made with Vincent J. Seman from Seman Law Offices, LLC, (670) 323-2115. Failure of the bidder to inspect the property will not constitute grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the bidder.

**3. Warranties and Covenants.** The property listed in this Notice will be sold in its current condition, "as is". The sale will be held without any warranties or covenants whatsoever, whether express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability and/or title for any purpose whatsoever, all of which warranties and covenants are hereby expressly disclaimed. Neither the undersigned nor Plaintiff shall be liable for the quality of the property listed for sale, or for any fault or defect in the description thereof. Buyer shall not be entitled to rescission, damages, or any other remedy on account thereof.

**4. Conduct of Sale.**  
a. RESERVE. The sale will be held with reserve. Disclosure of the reserve price on the property offered will be at the sole discretion of the undersigned but will in no case be less than the outstanding judgment, with costs, in favor of Plaintiff.  
b. ADVANCE BIDS. Bids may be submitted in advance for the property listed. The highest of such advance bids will be the opening bid for the property at the public auction. Advance bids must be submitted in writing and delivered to Vincent J. Seman, Esq., Seman Law Offices, LLC, Second Floor, JET Building, P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950.  
c. DISPUTES. The undersigned may resubmit for public auction any property listed in this notice if a dispute arises as to any bid thereon.  
d. DEPOSIT. Immediately after a sale is consummated, the successful bidder shall pay the undersigned a deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price. Payment shall be in cash or certified check. The balance of ninety percent (90%) must be paid to the Plaintiff, in care of Seman Law Offices, LLC, Trust Account, within three (3) days from the date of sale, in cash or certified check, if the balance is not paid, Plaintiff will retain the deposit as liquidated damages, and may again offer the property for sale.  
e. MEMORANDUM OF SALE. If requested by the undersigned, a successful bidder must sign a Memorandum of Sale immediately after the sale of the property is struck at auction.

**5. Court Approval Required.** The sale of the subject property is subject to approval by the Court. The Auctioneer and Plaintiff make no warranties or promises with respect to Court approval of the sale, including but not limited to the time in which such approval shall be granted. No delay in the granting of Court approval shall be grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the successful bidder. The successful bidder will be promptly notified if and when Court approval is granted.

**6. Change of Terms and Conditions of Sale.** The undersigned reserves the right to change any of the terms hereof by announcement, written or oral, made before the public auction or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause, will be binding on all bidders by constructive notice. Plaintiff expressly reserves the right to withdraw the property listed in this Notice before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted, or to request an adjournment of the sale, without notice, at any time before any specific property is sold.

Dated this 8th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Vincent J. Seman  
VINCENT J. SEMAN  
Attorney for Plaintiff

VINCENT J. SEMAN, CNMI Bar No. F-0361  
Seman Law Offices, LLC  
JET Realty Bldg., Suite 204  
P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168  
Saipan, MP 96950  
Telephone: (670) 323-2115  
E-mail: vjseman@semanlaw.com

Attorney for: Petitioner Gill Blas Condominium Owners Association

### IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

GILL BLAS CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,	CIVIL CASE NO. 23-0023
vs.	NOTICE OF EXECUTION SALE
SHIMA OSADA, et al, Defendants.	

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 4, 2023, the undersigned will sell at public auction to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, to satisfy a judgment entered in the above-captioned case in favor of Plaintiff, all of Defendant Shima Osada's interest in and to real property situated in Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, described as:

Remaining leasehold interest expiring on October 11, 2044 in Unit #308 of the Gill Blas Condominiums, situated on that portion of Lot No. 003 D 19, as more particularly described in the Gill Blas Sublease and Residential Sales Agreement on File at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office as File No. 96-1156

**1. Date, Time and Place of Sale.** The sale, open to the general public (including the Plaintiff and Defendant), will be on Friday, January 5, 2024, at 10:00a.m. at Seman Law Offices, LLC, 2nd Floor, JET Building, Gualo Rai, Saipan, CNMI.

**2. Inspection of Property.** The sale property is located in Garapan, Saipan and may be inspected upon request prior to the public auction. Arrangements for inspecting the premises can be made with Vincent J. Seman from Seman Law Offices, LLC, (670) 323-2115. Failure of the bidder to inspect the property will not constitute grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the bidder.

**3. Warranties and Covenants.** The property listed in this Notice will be sold in its current condition, "as is". The sale will be held without any warranties or covenants whatsoever, whether express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability and/or title for any purpose whatsoever, all of which warranties and covenants are hereby expressly disclaimed. Neither the undersigned nor Plaintiff shall be liable for the quality of the property listed for sale, or for any fault or defect in the description thereof. Buyer shall not be entitled to rescission, damages, or any other remedy on account thereof.

**4. Conduct of Sale.**  
a. RESERVE. The sale will be held with reserve. Disclosure of the reserve price on the property offered will be at the sole discretion of the undersigned but will in no case be less than the outstanding judgment, with costs, in favor of Plaintiff.  
b. ADVANCE BIDS. Bids may be submitted in advance for the property listed. The highest of such advance bids will be the opening bid for the property at the public auction. Advance bids must be submitted in writing and delivered to Vincent J. Seman, Esq., Seman Law Offices, LLC, Second Floor, JET Building, P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950.  
c. DISPUTES. The undersigned may resubmit for public auction any property listed in this notice if a dispute arises as to any bid thereon.  
d. DEPOSIT. Immediately after a sale is consummated, the successful bidder shall pay the undersigned a deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price. Payment shall be in cash or certified check. The balance of ninety percent (90%) must be paid to the Plaintiff, in care of Seman Law Offices, LLC, Trust Account, within three (3) days from the date of sale, in cash or certified check, if the balance is not paid, Plaintiff will retain the deposit as liquidated damages, and may again offer the property for sale.  
e. MEMORANDUM OF SALE. If requested by the undersigned, a successful bidder must sign a Memorandum of Sale immediately after the sale of the property is struck at auction.

**5. Court Approval Required.** The sale of the subject property is subject to approval by the Court. The Auctioneer and Plaintiff make no warranties or promises with respect to Court approval of the sale, including but not limited to the time in which such approval shall be granted. No delay in the granting of Court approval shall be grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the successful bidder. The successful bidder will be promptly notified if and when Court approval is granted.

**6. Change of Terms and Conditions of Sale.** The undersigned reserves the right to change any of the terms hereof by announcement, written or oral, made before the public auction or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause, will be binding on all bidders by constructive notice. Plaintiff expressly reserves the right to withdraw the property listed in this Notice before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted, or to request an adjournment of the sale, without notice, at any time before any specific property is sold.

Dated this 8th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Vincent J. Seman  
VINCENT J. SEMAN  
Attorney for Plaintiff

VINCENT J. SEMAN, CNMI Bar No. F-0361  
Seman Law Offices, LLC  
JET Realty Bldg., Suite 204  
P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168  
Saipan, MP 96950  
Telephone: (670) 323-2115  
E-mail: vjseman@semanlaw.com

Attorney for: Petitioner Gill Blas Condominium Owners Association

### IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

GILL BLAS CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,	CIVIL CASE NO. 23-0023
vs.	NOTICE OF EXECUTION SALE
KOUSEI FUJIIWARA, et al, Defendants.	

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 4, 2023, the undersigned will sell at public auction to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, to satisfy a judgment entered in the above-captioned case in favor of Plaintiff, all of Defendant Kousei Fujiwara's interest in and to real property situated in Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, described as:

Remaining leasehold interest expiring on October 11, 2044 in Unit #302 of the Gill Blas Condominiums, situated on that portion of Lot No. 003 D 19, as more particularly described in the Gill Blas Sublease and Residential Sales Agreement on File at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office as File No. 96-1156

**1. Date, Time and Place of Sale.** The sale, open to the general public (including the Plaintiff and Defendant), will be on Friday, January 5, 2024, at 10:00a.m. at Seman Law Offices, LLC, 2nd Floor, JET Building, Gualo Rai, Saipan, CNMI.

**2. Inspection of Property.** The sale property is located in Garapan, Saipan and may be inspected upon request prior to the public auction. Arrangements for inspecting the premises can be made with Vincent J. Seman from Seman Law Offices, LLC, (670) 323-2115. Failure of the bidder to inspect the property will not constitute grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the bidder.

**3. Warranties and Covenants.** The property listed in this Notice will be sold in its current condition, "as is". The sale will be held without any warranties or covenants whatsoever, whether express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability and/or title for any purpose whatsoever, all of which warranties and covenants are hereby expressly disclaimed. Neither the undersigned nor Plaintiff shall be liable for the quality of the property listed for sale, or for any fault or defect in the description thereof. Buyer shall not be entitled to rescission, damages, or any other remedy on account thereof.

**4. Conduct of Sale.**  
a. RESERVE. The sale will be held with reserve. Disclosure of the reserve price on the property offered will be at the sole discretion of the undersigned but will in no case be less than the outstanding judgment, with costs, in favor of Plaintiff.  
b. ADVANCE BIDS. Bids may be submitted in advance for the property listed. The highest of such advance bids will be the opening bid for the property at the public auction. Advance bids must be submitted in writing and delivered to Vincent J. Seman, Esq., Seman Law Offices, LLC, Second Floor, JET Building, P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950.  
c. DISPUTES. The undersigned may resubmit for public auction any property listed in this notice if a dispute arises as to any bid thereon.  
d. DEPOSIT. Immediately after a sale is consummated, the successful bidder shall pay the undersigned a deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price. Payment shall be in cash or certified check. The balance of ninety percent (90%) must be paid to the Plaintiff, in care of Seman Law Offices, LLC, Trust Account, within three (3) days from the date of sale, in cash or certified check, if the balance is not paid, Plaintiff will retain the deposit as liquidated damages, and may again offer the property for sale.  
e. MEMORANDUM OF SALE. If requested by the undersigned, a successful bidder must sign a Memorandum of Sale immediately after the sale of the property is struck at auction.

**5. Court Approval Required.** The sale of the subject property is subject to approval by the Court. The Auctioneer and Plaintiff make no warranties or promises with respect to Court approval of the sale, including but not limited to the time in which such approval shall be granted. No delay in the granting of Court approval shall be grounds for any claim, adjustment or rescission by the successful bidder. The successful bidder will be promptly notified if and when Court approval is granted.

**6. Change of Terms and Conditions of Sale.** The undersigned reserves the right to change any of the terms hereof by announcement, written or oral, made before the public auction or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause, will be binding on all bidders by constructive notice. Plaintiff expressly reserves the right to withdraw the property listed in this Notice before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted, or to request an adjournment of the sale, without notice, at any time before any specific property is sold.

Dated this 8th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Vincent J. Seman  
VINCENT J. SEMAN  
Attorney for Plaintiff





CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In her Christmas message, Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) shared the passage of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, giving a well-deserved 5.2% pay raise for men and women in the military.

# Merry Christmas from Radewagen



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) and her son-in-law, Aleksi Aleksiev, at the White House Christmas ball 2023 with President Joe and first lady Jill Biden.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) visits the House Speaker's office during Christmas season.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.—** Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) released a message in celebration of Christmas.

“Have a merry Christmas! ‘A merry heart does good like a medicine,’ (Proverbs 17:22). Once again, this December has been a busy stretch in Washington as Congress continues the rest of the appropriations work for 2024,” said Radewagen. “It was great news that on Dec. 14, we completed final passage of the National Defense Authorization Act, authorizing a well-deserved 5.2% pay raise for our men and women in the military. To each of our Toa o Samoa, and our military families, thank you! We’ll be thinking of those of you stationed away from home during the holidays.”

“This season is a celebration of joy, peace, and hope, but most of all, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ,” she continued. “A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed,” (Proverbs 11:25 NIV). May we remember charity, and take special joy in our families, friends, and many blessings this year. God bless American Samoa, the United States, and all our homes this Christmas.” (PR)



## NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING for Green Meadow School

The Public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board Public Hearing on this request for a Conditional Use Permit. Green Meadow School is proposing to renovate and occupy two (2) detached pre-existing structures for its “School, Private” Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 007 H 01 in the village of Chalan Kanoa. This area is zoned as Village Residential.

A public hearing will be held on:

**Date:** Dec. 28, 2023  
**Time:** 2:30 pm  
**Place:** Governor Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center

Comments on the proposal may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments may be submitted directly to the Zoning Office before 3 pm, Dec. 27, 2023. Please send written comments via e-mail to [zoningboard@cnmizoning.com](mailto:zoningboard@cnmizoning.com), via US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950, or deliver them to the Zoning Office, 5911 Chalan Pale Arnold, Chalan Laulau (former IT&E).

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq.) and the Amended Saipan Zoning Law of 2013.

/s/ Henry S. Hofschneider, Chairman



## NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING for Top Shelf, LLC

The Public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board Public Hearing on this request for a Conditional Use Permit. Top Shelf, LLC is proposing to amend Conditional Use Permit No. 2020-10297 to include an Outdoor Growing area for its “Cannabis Farm” Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 053 E 11 in the village of As Teo. This area is zoned as Rural.

A public hearing will be held on:

**Date:** Dec. 28, 2023  
**Time:** 2:30 pm  
**Place:** Governor Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center

Comments on the proposal may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments may be submitted directly to the Zoning Office before 3 pm, Dec. 27, 2023. Please send written comments via e-mail to [zoningboard@cnmizoning.com](mailto:zoningboard@cnmizoning.com), via US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950, or deliver them to the Zoning Office, 5911 Chalan Pale Arnold, Chalan Laulau (former IT&E).

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq.) and the Amended Saipan Zoning Law of 2013.

/s/ Henry S. Hofschneider, Chairman



## COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



### INVITATION FOR BIDS CUC-IFB-24-002

#### AGINGAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENTS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The work consists of furnishing all labor, supervision, equipment, materials and supplies for the construction of various improvements within the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for the project referred to as the AGINGAN WWTP IMPROVEMENTS, Saipan, CNMI under Project No. S18-065 and Project No. S20-079.

The work generally includes, but is not limited to:

##### Project No. S18-065

Installation of the owner-furnished primary screen within 120 calendar days after Notice to Proceed is issued. Additionally, replacement of the clarifier drive; rehabilitation of the headworks includes replacement of the weir gates to stop gate, a 1/2-ton hand crank hoist/crane; clarifier bypass; electrical service rehabilitation, replacement of the existing Motor Control Center (MCC), installation of a generator automatic transfer switch (ATS) and digester decanter improvements. The work shall be done in accordance with Project No. S18-065 Plans and Specifications.

##### Project No. S20-079

Provision of temporary facilities including bypass pumping; furnishing and installing new Vortex Grit Removal Equipment and headworks slide gates, which will require demolition of certain elements within and improvements to the existing headworks channel and deck area; replacement of the existing surface aerator equipment in the North/South Aeration Tanks and Aerobic Digester Tank with a new surface aerator equipment which will require modifications to the existing concrete tank structures; replacement of existing pipe supports for the Aeration Basin influent piping; associated electrical, instrumentation, and control improvements; demobilization; and all other work described in Project No. S20-079 Plans and Specifications.

The work shall be done without disruption to the daily operation of the wastewater system.

CUC requires the Project to be completed within 820 calendar days from the date of the award of contract.

**The project is funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.**

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 27, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

**One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies** must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-24-002, Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements”**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A **Bid Guarantee** of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on December 28, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at [manny.sablan@cucgov.org](mailto:manny.sablan@cucgov.org) with a copy to Mr. Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer – via email at [larry.manacop@cucgov.org](mailto:larry.manacop@cucgov.org), and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at [marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org](mailto:marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org).

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE  
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN  
Purchasing Administrator



# Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* arrives at new home port in Pearl Harbor

**HONOLULU, Hawaii**—U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* (WMEC 903) and crew arrived at its new home port at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Wednesday, after transiting more than 8,000 nautical miles over 36-days from Portsmouth, Virginia.

The *Harriet Lane* is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter and spent more than 15 months in a Service Life Extension Program in Baltimore, Maryland, to prepare for the transition in missions and operations. Following reconstitution of the crew in July and returning to Portsmouth in August, the crew went through an extensive dockside period, ensuring the cutter was ready for the transit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

"Re-homeporting U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* is indicative of the Coast Guard's commitment to the Indo-Pacific—the most dynamic region in the world," said Rear Adm. Brendan McPherson, deputy commander, U.S.



USCG

The *Harriet Lane* is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter and spent more than 15 months in a Service Life Extension Program in Baltimore, Maryland, to prepare for the transition in missions and operations.

Coast Guard Pacific Area. "*Harriet Lane* will work by, with, and through allies and partners within the Indo-Pacific region to promote capacity building and model good maritime governance."

"The crew and I look forward to building partnerships in Oceania to enhance our capabilities, strengthen maritime governance and security while promoting individual sovereignty," said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer of the *Harriet Lane*. "We plan to build upon many

decades of enduring support, operating in concert with the needs of our partners."

*Harriet Lane* and crew departed Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, November 2023, and during the transit, the crew conducted trainings for upcoming operations along with professional development for crewmembers. *Harriet Lane* transited through the Panama Canal, and had port calls in Golfito, Costa Rica and San Diego.

*Harriet Lane*, commissioned in 1984, is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter now homeported in Honolulu to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service's medium endurance cut-



USCG

U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* (WMEC 903) and crew arrive at its new homeport at Pearl Harbor, Dec. 14, 2023, after transiting more than 9,440 miles over 35 days from Portsmouth, Virginia.

ter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment. (USCG)



USCG

U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area deputy commander Rear Adm. Brendan McPherson said re-homeporting U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* is indicative of the Coast Guard's commitment to the Indo-Pacific.



USCG

A crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* is welcomed home by family.



USCG

Following reconstitution of the crew in July and returning to Portsmouth in August, the crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* went through an extensive dockside period, ensuring the cutter was ready for the transit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.



## Commonwealth Zoning Board Meeting

December 28, 2023 | 2:30 PM

Multi-Purpose Center • Susupe, Saipan  
Tel: 670-234-9661/2 • Fax: 670-234-9666  
E-mail: ZoningBoard@cnmzoning.com

## AGENDA

### A. Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of 12/28/2023 Meeting Agenda
4. Adoption of 12/07/2023 Special Meeting Minutes
5. Communications
6. Public Comments (*not for items to be discussed in item B. Public Hearings*)

### B. Public Hearings:

1. **Conditional Use Application #2023-1260** – Green Meadow School is proposing to renovate and occupy two (2) detached pre-existing structures for its "School, Private" Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 007 H 01 in the village of Chalan Kanoa. This area is zoned as Village Residential.
2. **Conditional Use Application #2023-1645** – Top Shelf, LLC is proposing to amend Conditional Use Permit No. 2020-10297 to include an Outdoor Growing area for its "Cannabis Farm" Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 053 E 11 in the village of As Teo. This area is zoned as Rural.

### C. Old Business

1. **Zoning Board and Office comments on Proposed House Local Bill 23-XX** – To amend the Saipan Official Zoning Map sheet 17 of 29 to rezone certain districts to "Tourist Resort"; and for other purposes, *by Chairman John Paul Sablan*.

### D. New Business

1. Parking regulations in Garapan Core (GC), Garapan East (GE), Village Commercial (VC), and other zoning districts.

### E. Zoning Administrator's Report

1. Operations (Permitting and Enforcement)
2. Zoning's Clean-Healthy-Attractive-Safe Campaign
3. Fiscal Years 2023 Budget
4. Zoning FY23 Citizen Centric Report
5. Update on proposed Blighted Properties regulations, as authorized by Saipan Local Law 20-25, prior to commencement of full enforcement actions on January 01, 2024
6. Update on Zoning Office Buildings Renovations, Capitol Hill Proposed Resolutions for Board Adoption
7. To correct the title of the law from "Saipan Zoning Law of 2013-As amended" to "Saipan Zoning Law of 2020" for publication (as authorized under SZL Section 1309)
- b. To adopt proposed changes to Article 4. Table of Uses for transmittal to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
  1. To include Cannabis Manufacturing and Processing as a conditional use within Rural, VC, MC, and Industrial zones.
  2. To include Furniture Stores as a permitted use in VC, MC, Industrial, GC, GE, and Beach Road zoning districts.
- c. To rescind official Zoning communication dated August 2021 to surveyors and agencies regarding the suspension of *Article 11. Land Development and Subdivision*
- d. To implement immediate removal of signboards at intersections on major and secondary roadways, and limit the placement and maximum size for directional signs
- e. To impose requirements on Rezone process
  - 1.) Expiration date to commence development after adoption of Rezone applications by the Commonwealth Zoning Board and the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation

### F. Executive Session

### G. Adjournment

/s/ Henry S. Hofschneider, Chairman



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

## BOARD OF PAROLE

P.O. BOX 502641, Saipan, MP 96950-2641  
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## TO ALL MEDIA SERVICES PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

**Message:** The Honorable Arnold I. Palacios and the Honorable David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor, through the CNMI Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992," hereby give Official Notice that a **Board Meeting** is scheduled for **December 29, 2023, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.**, at the **CNMI Board of Parole Conference Room, Capitol Hill Bldg 1216, Saipan MP 96950**. The following items are included in the agenda:

### Board Meeting Agenda

#### I. Preliminary Matters

- A. Call to order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Presence of Quorum

#### II. Consent Items

- A. Adoption of Agenda

#### III. Old Business

- A. Selection of Board member's position  
Chairperson  
Vicechair-person  
Hearing Examiner
- B. Discussion/Decision of Chief Parole Officer N. Reyes (contract)

#### IV. Miscellaneous

- A. Schedule of Next Board Meeting
- B. Schedule of Next Parole Hearing

#### V. Adjournment

If deemed necessary, members of the Board of Parole may elect to vote to meet in Executive Session to discuss any of the items listed above.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact the Board of Parole Office at telephone number 664-3300.

/s/  
Lucinda R. Selepeo  
Acting BOP Chairman

12/20/2023  
Date

## JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

**Job Title:** Computer Specialist

**Hours:** Full-Time

**Company:** Sun & Surf dba National Office Supply

**Location:** 3160 Beach Road, I Liyang Saipan, MP 96950

**Job Summary:** The Computer Specialist performs duties and responsibilities involving installing and repairing computer hardware and software; meeting with clients to identify their needs, examine and troubleshoot equipment, perform upgrades, and discuss the extent of repairs or replacements to clients. Education: Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university in computer science.

**Required Qualifications:** Experience: 24 months of work experience as Computer Specialist. Knowledge: circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, computer hardware and software, including applications and programming, digital copiers, multi-functional printers, time recorders, printers.

**To Apply:** This job opportunity is for a full-time position. Only US-workers will be considered. All interested US applicants must submit a resume and employment certification showing the required work experience via e-mail at nos.saipan.hr@gmail.com. Applicants may also submit their documents personally at the Admin Office of Sun & Surf Limited dba National Office Supply, 3160 Beach Road, I Liyang Saipan, MP 96950. They may also call (670) 234-3197 for directions.



# Opinion

Hafa Adai!

## Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

### EDITORIAL

## Don't surrender on immigration: Aid Ukraine without undermining welcoming newcomers

In trying to win support from recalcitrant Republicans to reform a badly broken immigration system, the Biden administration has reportedly indicated it'd be open to indefinite authorities to expel asylum seekers and a huge expansion of our already largely unaccountable detention system.

This restrictionist approach will probably be framed as a compromise, as a breath of fresh air in a hyper-polarized environment. Yet it is worth pointing out that much of what's on the table would have been considered an ultra-extreme position a decade ago, so heavy-handed that it would have been well outside the mainstream GOP, relegated to the radical fringes.

These fringes included Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, often a lonesome voice for diehard anti-immigrant ideas at a time when conservative colleagues like Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham were negotiating for a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants. Sessions was known to have long and spirited discussions around shutting down immigration with his then-communications director, a young Republican agitator named Stephen Miller.

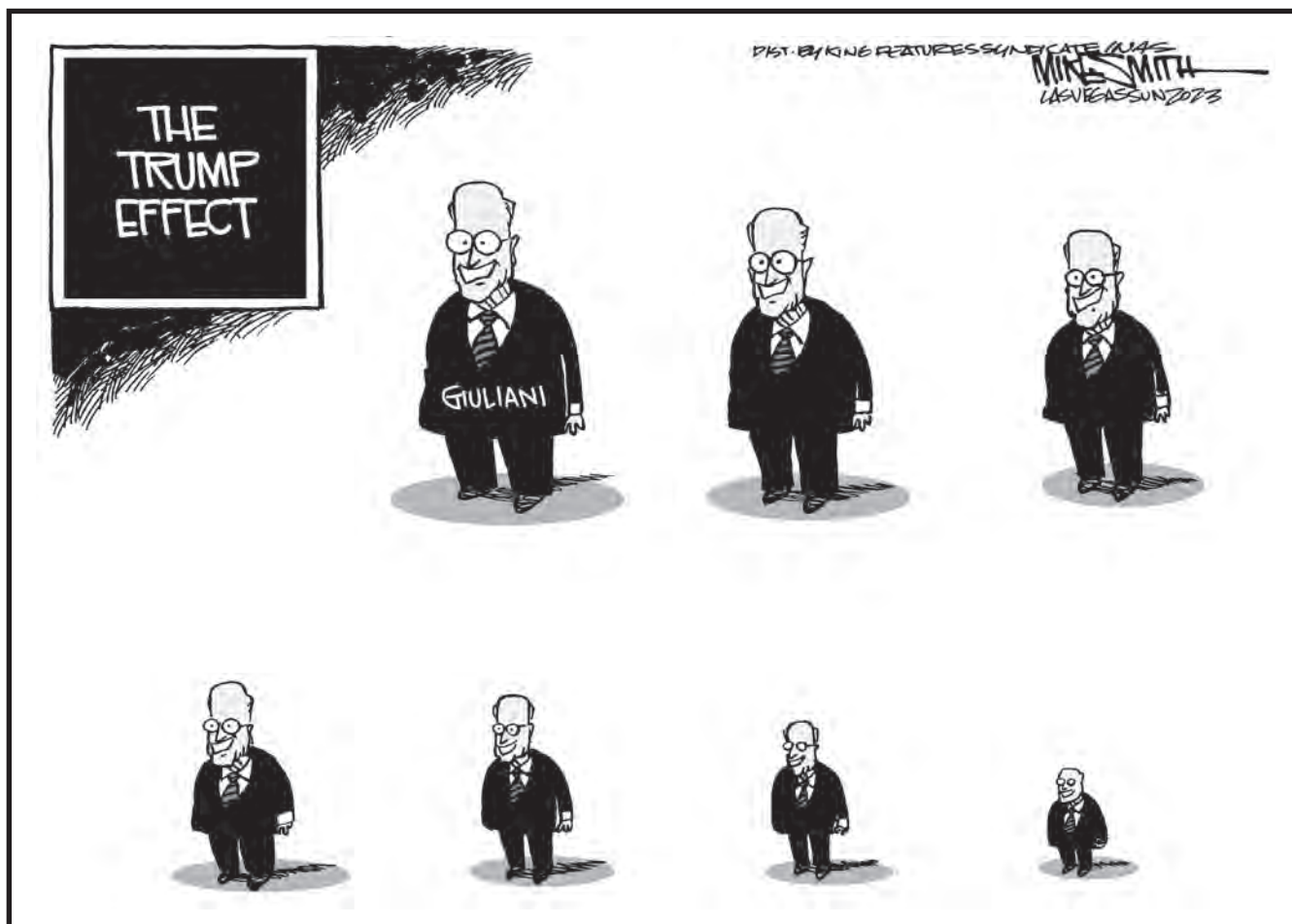
Years later, Sessions would be attorney general and Miller one of the most powerful people in the Trump White House, tasked with turning these years of discussions into policy. Miller was more or less directly responsible for that administration's most egregious infamies, including the family separation policy. Much of what he drew up, including the Title 42 expulsion policy, is a direct predecessor to what's now being considered.

At the time, these policies were rightly and roundly condemned by Democrats, not to mention civil libertarians, human rights groups and others. It's dismaying to see the Biden administration now sign off on the same. Everyone agrees that we need a shift in approach to immigration, but this isn't the way to do it.

It's all the more embarrassing that this is all being considered as a trade for aid to Ukraine, an ally at current, dire risk of being subsumed into the imperialist ambitions of Vladimir Putin. People around the world are inspired by the tenacity of the Ukrainian population as it's fought, for nearly two years now, to fend off the annexation effort of the despot's armies. Admirable as their resolve is, ultimate victory is far from assured, and successes so far have been largely predicated on significant international support, including weapons and financial assistance.

Some try to tarnish globe-trotting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as some kind of narcissist basking in the lime-light, but it's clear that the fatigue-clad wartime leader would rather be at home with his troops, where he's remained based despite pleadings from other leaders to decamp to safer locales. The reason that Zelenskyy went to Washington last week, the reason he keeps coming back and showing up at international

See DON'T on Page 9



## Gaza will need a Marshall Plan of its own to rebuild

Following the horrendous massacre of Oct. 7, Israelis are now united behind two immediate goals: Bringing back home their hostages and dealing Hamas a deadly blow. However, few in Israel, including the ministers of the emergency government formed to lead the war, have asked themselves the question any old and wise Middle Eastern would have asked: wa ba'adein, and then what?

Certain answers to this question could and should be ruled out immediately, both on moral and practical grounds, such as the idea of relocating the people of Gaza to the Egyptian Sinai desert, or the vision of some ultra-rightist circles in Israel to settle in Gaza again, after pulling out of there in 2005. Even the declaration of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, that after the war Israel would maintain an Israeli security presence in Gaza, would not be so easily implemented. U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris summed it up: "Under no circumstances will the United States permit the forced relocation of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank, the besiegement of Gaza, or the redrawing of the borders of Gaza."

So now we know what shouldn't or wouldn't be done. A crisis, however, presents new opportunities. Due to the vicious policy of Hamas, of using all the civilians in Gaza as human shields, the only way to uproot this terrorist organization entails a massive devastation to homes and infrastructure. And if some parts of Gaza today look like the European cities lying in rubble at the end of World War II, then the situation also calls for a remedy similar to the one employed after 1945: A New Marshall Plan for Gaza.

The original Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Program, which was named after its originator, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, provided since 1948 \$13 billion to reconstruct cities, industries and infrastructure heavily damaged during the war and to remove trade barriers between European neighbors—as well as foster commerce between those countries and the United States.

Ideas calling for a Marshall Plan for the Middle East have been floated in the past, the last one produced in 2020 by the Cambridge Middle East and North Africa Forum (CMENAF). Although the project, led by a professor, Malik Dahlan, was carried out before the Abraham accords, it definitely leaned on the proven yearning of people in the Middle East for a better economic future. A year earlier, James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, conducted a comprehensive poll in the region and concluded that "when we asked Arabs what their foreign policy priorities were for the region, far and away their top choices are investing more of the region's wealth and expertise in creating a more prosperous and stable Arab world."

A Marshall Plan for Gaza has a chance to succeed because it will

By **URI DROMI**

Chicago Tribune

*Uri Dromi is the founder and president of the Jerusalem Press Club and was the spokesman of the Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres governments in 1992-1996.*



serve several interests: The desire of Gazans to be rescued from their current miserable situation; the wish of Israel to see on its border a base for nation-building rather than a nest of terror; the quest of moderate Arab states for stability in the region; the economic interests of outside players; the opportunity for President Joe Biden to jump-start the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; and to rekindle the Israeli-Saudi rapprochement.

In pushing ahead a New Marshall Plan for Gaza, we should carefully learn the lessons from the Bremer Plan for the reconstruction of Iraq. The scholars of CMENAF explain why in spite of the American good intentions, the Bremer Plan failed: The Iraqis themselves didn't feel a sense of ownership; the plan encouraged nepotism and benefited the few whom the Americans liked; the heavy-handedness by the donor and investor countries was perceived as a new kind of colonialism; and finally, the endemic Middle Eastern corruption, in which greedy American corporations happily collaborated. In six months in 2003-2004, for example, \$8.8 billion of the Iraqi government's expenditures were unaccounted for, including \$3.4 billion billed for "security."

With all the uncertainties, though, there is a fair chance that, freed of Hamas' venomous grip, Gaza can turn from a land of poverty and misery into an accelerator of progress and prosperity.

And if Israel has to stop before it cleanses all of Gaza of Hamas's destructiveness, then southern Gaza will be crushed between Israel, determined not to let Hamas harass her again, and Egypt, which loathes this nest of Muslim Brotherhood on its doorstep. Northern Gaza, on the other hand, can follow the examples of Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states, and enjoy all the benefits a peace with Israel can offer.

In that case, the two parts of Gaza, like those of Korea, would then stand out as examples of the two options open to inhabitants of the same region. In the words of Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress and another champion of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East: "Palestinian parents would have to decide whether their hatred of Israel is so strong that they would prefer their children to grow up in poverty and die as 'martyrs'—or share in a better eco-

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**EDITORIAL POLICY**

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

# Talks can't end the Ukraine war, because Russia lies

By **ANASTASSIA FEDYK** and **TATYANA DERYUGINA**  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

**F**ollowing the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022, Ukraine has suffered tremendously. Tens of thousands have died, and a quarter of the country's prewar population has been displaced. Homes, neighborhoods and entire cities have been reduced to rubble.

Some question the wisdom of Ukraine continuing to fight back instead of seeking to negotiate with Russia. President Vladimir Putin himself claims he "does not reject the idea of peace talks," while prominent figures have called for negotiations, possibly involving a settlement to cede occupied territories in exchange for peace.

Calls for Ukraine to have such talks rely on an assumption that Russia would negotiate in good faith. But, looking to history as a guide, this assumption is naïve. Russia's actions over the last 31 years reveal a troubling pattern of frequent lying and breaking international agreements. Negotiations with Russia are therefore futile.

Russia agreed to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and to refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine in both the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty of 1997. In an agreement partitioning the Black Sea Fleet after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia agreed to pay Ukraine to lease a naval base in Sevastopol.

Seventeen years later, it illegally annexed that base and the rest of Crimea. In the Budapest Memorandum, Russia provided security assurances to Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear arsenal. Now, a nuclear power has launched a full-scale invasion of the state whose security it was supposed to protect.

Russia's other neighbors have had similar experiences. Russia armed and fought on the side of separatists in both Georgia and Moldova.

In 1992, Russia signed two agreements ensuring the territorial integrity of Georgia and promising to avoid military involvement in its separatist conflicts. Yet in 2008, Russia invaded, falsely claiming that Georgia was committing genocide against

South Ossetians to justify the war. In a cease-fire agreement brokered by the French president, Russia agreed to withdraw its troops from Georgia—but it never did. Fifteen years later, Russian troops continue to occupy 20% of Georgian territory.

Similarly, some 1,500 Russian soldiers are stationed in the Moldovan region of Transnistria, more than 20 years after Russia made two agreements to withdraw them.

Russia has an abysmal track record of keeping agreements made with the countries it has invaded, including ones brokered by outside mediators and security organizations.

Perhaps Russia would be more likely to respect a treaty brokered by a powerful country such as the United States? Unfortunately, history provides no evidence for this assumption, either. Russia has broken every nuclear treaty it has signed with the U.S.

Under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty signed at the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia agreed to ban missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,000 kilometers. Within the last decade, Russia secretly tested a cruise missile with a range of 2,500 kilometers and now deploys it in four battalions.

This year, Russia suspended its participation in the New START treaty. Moscow had already been refusing to restart mandatory inspections of its arsenal after a pause early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in its dealings with the U.S., Russia readily violates treaties and abandons them when convenient.

Russia has also shown a pattern of disregard for states throughout Europe and the Americas. Its interference in the 2016 U.S. elections, when Russia hacked into the computer servers of the Democratic National Convention and targeted voter systems in all 50 states, was broadly publicized in the media. Additionally, the Kremlin has illegally meddled in the elections of countries including Belarus, France, Georgia, Germany, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine.

Russia has also conducted less subtle attempts at interference in foreign politics. The Kremlin attempted a coup in Montenegro a year before the country ratified its accession to NATO. Western intelligence concluded that a special unit of the Russian GRU planned to attack the Montenegrin parliament and assassinate the prime minister on the day of the parliamentary elections. This year, there have been allega-

tions that Russia planned a similar coup in Moldova.

Russia's readiness to ignore the sovereignty of other nations is also exemplified by its audacious assassinations of political opponents in broad daylight across Europe. In 2006, former British double agent Alexander Litvinenko died from radiation sickness in London after drinking a cup of tea poisoned with polonium-210. British investigators concluded the assassination, carried out by Russian FSB agents, was probably ordered by Putin.

In 2018, Russian intelligence poisoned another former spy, Sergei Skripal, in a park in Salisbury. He survived the attempt, but a British woman died after accidentally coming into contact with the poison. The following year, a Chechen insurgent fighter named Zelimkhan Khangoshvili was shot and killed by an FSB agent in the middle of a park in Berlin.

What is notable about these violent acts and attempts at election interference is that besides trampling on other states' sovereignty, Russia consistently lies. According to Putin: "We didn't meddle, we aren't meddling, and we will not meddle in any elections."

The Kremlin also mocked British investigations into the poisonings of Litvinenko and Skripal as "totally absurd." Russia's modus operandi has always been "deny everything and admit nothing."

Those who argue that it is time for Ukraine to negotiate with Russia are overlooking reality. Russia has broken every peace treaty it ever signed with Ukraine, and many more with other states it has inflicted violence upon.

The Kremlin operates without regard for its neighbors, the United States, European countries, or any moral or legal boundaries. Putin has no reservations about interfering in democratic elections, plotting coups or murdering people even on NATO soil.

Negotiations hinge on having a modicum of trust in the other party's commitment to honor agreements, but Russia has demolished any grounds for trust.

*Anastassia Fedyk is an assistant professor of finance at the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. Tatyana Deryugina is an associate professor of finance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Emilia Marshall, a research fellow with Economists for Ukraine, contributed to this article.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Forward vs. backward thinking

**O**ur governor has chosen wisely for us and we as a people need to get on board and start moving forward in the same direction and stop looking in the rearview mirror at China. EVS-TAP is an attempt to circumvent our fathers in Washington, especially since it was recommended by the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump, which had supported China!

Jude has poli-tricked the entire Legislature, preying on their desperation to do something stupid, even taking us backwards to 2019 Trump-GOP stuff. But that ship has sailed as all the variables for getting tourists from China have changed drastically and there is still the fact that the Japanese are not coming if the CNMI is to be a Chinese tourist's destination.

Those who are crying China don't get it and are only thinking about and seeing dollar signs but the adverse effects by the feds possibly being angered at us for putting our eggs in China's basket does not justify the potential damage, as the feds may even say no more tourists from China.

There are three kinds of people when it comes to our economy: Those who make things happen, those who fight against things happening and those who just watch things happening. We need more people, especially in government and business sector making things happen, as the CNMI must change in a lot of different ways if we are to find any resemblance of prosperity. The business community comes together when they are losing money but if they would put half the energy they put into pleading for China into things and promotions like "special hotel packages" in Japan, having the governor declare a Japan Day or Week and other things in Japan that can entice the Japanese to come, the potential for their return can grow exponentially. But the hotels and businesses

are not doing any promotions in Japan, thinking that opening the door for the Chinese will solve their problem. That's a lazy and the cheap way out. To put it simply, too many have gotten into the lazy thinking that investors and the Chinese will come and save us without us doing any work. Heck, as bad as we need new attractions, no one is working on the theme park I suggested for the CNMI to become a regional destination. But we have those trying to stop things like the Amelia Earhart Monument, which appeals to world travelers who number in the millions.

The reality is we must start thinking outside the traditional box of our tourism and start doing the work. We should have learned by now to do our homework. If we were all on the same page, there would be promotions in Japan, as there are millions of people in Japan who can afford to come to the CNMI but we are busy seeking China and doing nothing new to entice the Japanese! Why is the business sector crying like children wanting the governor to fix their problem when they should have seen this day coming? They should be acting like adults and doing the work to change things for the better. The reality is we must go back to the basics to rebuild our tourism industry that started with Japan—it's just that simple!

Kudos to Corrections Commissioner Anthony Torres for thinking outside the box to make things better for the CNMI and Guam and to Rep. Propst for weighing-in to support this new approach. It was far more convincing coming from a lawmaker like Rep. Propst that we the people should support this new approach as the new reality is this is the kind of forward outside-the-box thinking that we need to get out of this hole Ralph and crew dug for us all. We need to do all we can to execute the plan and goals of the governor, as fighting among ourselves is

not the solution. Stop thinking back on China and start moving forward with the new program. I will reiterate: the governor has chosen wisely with Japan and it's time for everyone who wants the CNMI to be successful to become a team player.

**Ambrose M. Bennett**  
Kagman III, Saipan

## GAZA

From page 8

conomic future with their Jewish neighbors and have fuller lives and happier families."

Sounds naive and unrealistic? Maybe, but worth a shot, because all other scenarios have been tested and failed.

## DON'T






From page 8

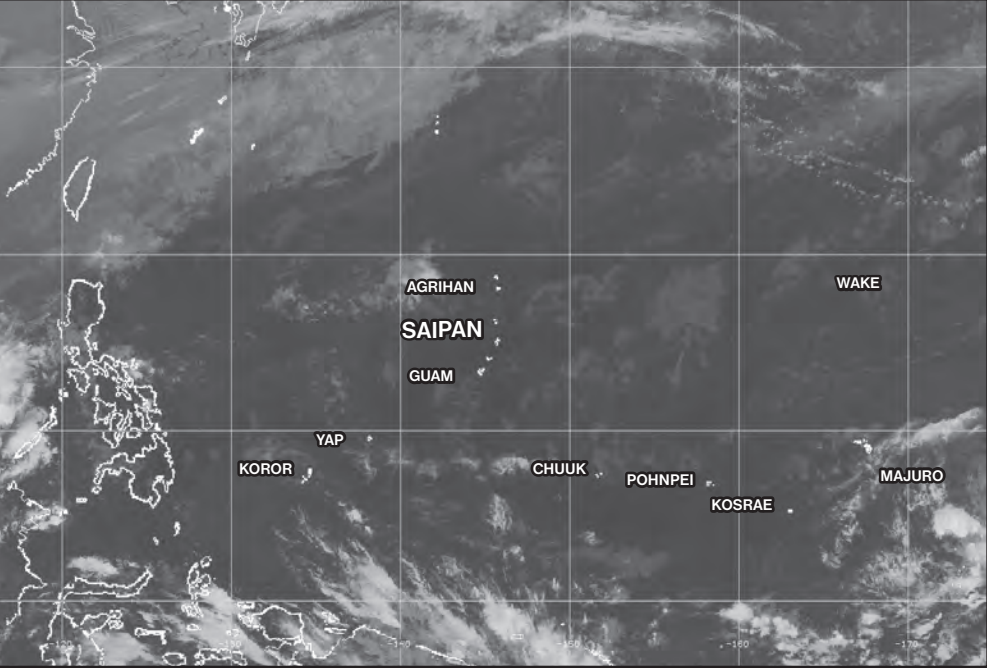
conferences and summits is because he knows that the continued support from the world community and the United States in particular is instrumental to the war effort.

Congressional Republicans know this, and they are aware of the implications of denying Ukraine aid to score some domestic political points and implement their extreme immigration agenda. Even as the Senate works to reach a deal, the House GOP seems uninterested, because ultimately they don't care much about the long-term implications of a Ukrainian loss. All that matters is pleasing the base.



# The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
									
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. east winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	
87	78°	87	78°	86	78°	86	77°	86	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



**PICTURE TIME: 5:36 AM WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023**

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery indicating partly cloudy skies and isolated trade showers. Latest buoy and altimetry data showing seas of 6 to 9 feet. Winds are moderate to fresh.

*Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>*

MICRONESIA			▲▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Friday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Saturday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Sunday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Monday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	1:00 AM	1:14 PM
Friday	-	1:54 AM	1:55 PM
Saturday	-	2:50 AM	2:37 PM
Sunday	-	3:47 AM	3:23 PM
Monday	-	4:45 AM	4:13 PM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2023							
DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4, 7	OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. <i>(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)</i>							

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.					
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023					
SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday
GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday
SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 64°	
Beijing	Sunny	43° / 25°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	72° / 63°	
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78° / 68°	
London	Mostly Cloudy	52° / 46°	
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	65° / 45°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	84° / 77°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	84° / 63°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 71°	
New York	Cloudy	47° / 45°	
Osaka	Sunny	54° / 41°	
Paris	Cloudy	50° / 45°	
Busan	Partly Cloudy	52° / 43°	
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 46°	
Salem	Showers	67° / 60°	
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	53° / 42°	
Seoul	Cloudy	45° / 34°	
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	54° / 37°	
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	54° / 48°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
2:18 AM	High Tide	1.22	
8:19 AM	Low Tide	0.38	
2:58 PM	High Tide	1.82	
10:07 PM	Low Tide	0.23	



# Business

## E-Land brings NC Picks to Saipan

By MARK RABAGO  
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EDITOR

» Warehouse-type discount store to have grand opening tomorrow

E-Land Group will be unveiling its first NC Picks outside Asia with the grand opening of the warehouse-type discount store tomorrow at the KASE II Building across T Galleria in Garapan.

Shop master Juelee Won said E-Land opened NC Picks in the tourist district of Saipan to offer local customers as well as tourists alike access to fashion items at a reasonable price, especially amidst the economic downturn.

NC Picks Saipan primarily focuses on sports and casual clothing, handling over 30 brands ranging from bags, shoes, to suitcases.



MARK RABAGO

NC Picks Saipan is located at the KASE II Building across T Galleria in Garapan.

Just some of the items available at great discounts at NC Picks Saipan are sports brands including Nike, Under Armour,

Adidas, Crocs, casual brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Lacoste, Champion, and Brooks Brothers, and

European brands such as Maison Kitsune, Comme des Garçons, and Ami.

NC Picks Saipan's brand

item clothing is 50%-80% lower than the original sale price because they directly purchase brand inventory from suppliers.

The major impetus in opening an NC Picks on Saipan, according to Won, is to serve the local market.

"There really is no major clothing outlet on Saipan. There's just one or two big stores and a bunch of smaller shops. Because of this, Saipan residents usually order from Amazon or eBay or those who can go to Guam buy at Macy's or Ross. We want to change that by bringing brand clothing that is affordable for locals so you don't really have to go online or off-island anymore to shop."

Aside from eliminating long shipping times for clothes to arrive and the fact that you can fit the clothes you want to buy right there and then, opening an NC Picks on Saipan also helps keep money circulating in the local economy, create jobs, as well as give tourists a unique shopping experience.

E-Land Group Corporate Social Responsibility manager Lindsey Ahn said it didn't take much to convince top brass to open an NC Picks on Saipan.

"If there's a chance for investment and mutual growth, the company won't hesitate. When we talk to tourists, they always mention that Saipan is great because of its natural beauty and fun water activities, but it lacks shopping like what Guam and Hawaii have. Opening NC Picks here also is a big thumbs up that the local economy will recover soon," she said.

Ahn said the opening of NC Picks Saipan perfectly aligns with E-Land's vision to expand the concept of a world where

anyone can wear pretty clothes at an affordable price.

"We hope that Saipan customers can try on high-quality clothes and find good prices without having to rely on online shopping or traveling to other islands. Continuously updating the brands and products desired by local customers will solidify its position as a beloved store on the island," she said.

NC Picks Retail Merchandise specialist Jennie Park said they will cater to what the local market wants when it comes to the items they will sell at the Saipan store.

"We will listen to local customers on the brands and styles they want or have been looking for. Then we can find them from our sources in Korea, China, and even in Europe and deliver those products here."

To mark its grand opening, NC Picks Saipan will have a promotions galore, starting with as much as a 70% markdown across the store, a Wheel of Fortune-type contest for the first 50 buying customers, and a surprise giveaway for those who spend more than \$100 (\$100 a OHAS beverage coupon, \$300 a Mandarin Duck T-shirt, and \$500 a Mandarin Duck backpack).

NC Picks—NC stands for New Core—is part of E-Land Retail, which has 44 stores in Korea and three stores in China. It generates a total revenue of over \$1.5 billion, making it a large-scale retail specialized company.

Coupled with the opening of OHAS Boulangerie & Café last September, E-Land is hoping that NC Picks Saipan will contribute to the revitalization of Garapan and help develop Saipan into the new tourist shopping mecca of the Western Pacific.

## GTA announces \$200M investment from Stonepeak

**TAMUNING, Guam**—TeleGuam Holdings, LLC ("GTA"), Guam's leading digital infrastructure provider of broadband, wireless, data center, and subsea cable landing services, and Stonepeak, a leading alternative investment firm specializing in infrastructure and real assets, today announced that they have reached an agreement whereby Stonepeak will provide up to a \$200 million strategic growth investment to GTA. The investment will be structured as primary capital and Huntsman Family Investments and its affiliates ("HFI") will continue to be the majority owner of GTA and operate the asset.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231217073342/en/>

GTA has long been Guam's trusted provider of digital infrastructure. In addition to its market-leading quad-play broadband, wireless, telephony, and video solutions, GTA serves global hyperscalers and telecommunications providers connected to Guam through its existing cable landing stations and data center facilities. GTA operates several cable landing stations and data centers in Piti, including its GNC Data Center, which recently added Cogent Communications, one of the world's largest Internet Service Providers, as a customer. It has also begun expanding into additional geographies with the development of its Alupang Data Center, a 4 megawatt (MW), Tier III data center that will be

the first edge computing-led data center in Guam and the region. With Stonepeak's investment, GTA will be able to further strengthen its presence throughout Guam through the development of additional data centers and the accelerated buildout of its leading fiber network to provide island-wide fiber-to-the-home service, offering faster speeds and increased resilience across the territory to help bridge the digital divide.

"When we acquired GTA in 2017, we backed a visionary management team, led by Roland Certeza and Joseph Shinohara, to develop the digital ecosystem on Guam. Despite the challenges of COVID and Typhoon Mawar, our GTA team has been steadfast in working towards that goal. Today, we are honored to partner with a world class investor, Stonepeak, for the next stage of GTA's growth and we are looking forward to leveraging their expertise. We are thankful to our GTA team and local investor partners for helping us get to this point," said Paul Huntsman, Chairman of GTA and President & CEO of Huntsman Family Investments.

"Given Guam's increasing importance as a strategic hub for transpacific subsea cables, we believe there will be strong demand for additional landing stations and colocation capacity in the years to come," said Andrew Thomas, Senior Managing Director at Stonepeak. "In our view, GTA is well positioned to meet that demand with its platform of landing stations and data center facilities spanning the island, intercon-

nected through a dense fiber network. We look forward to partnering with HFI and the GTA management team to continue to grow the company."

As part of this transaction, Benjamin Wu, Partner at Huntsman Family Investments, will assume the role of CEO of Forager Holdings, the parent company of GTA, as the business continues to invest in other digital infrastructure opportunities on Guam, the Pacific Islands, and in the Asia-Pacific region.

"With this investment, we intend to fortify our fiber network, accelerate our data center development and expand our regional presence to ensure that our customers can rely on us for responsive service. We believe that with the support of Stonepeak, we will develop Guam as a preferred gateway between the United States and our allies in Asia, leading to stronger economic and geopolitical ties," said Benjamin Wu.

The transaction is expected to close within the next month, subject to customary closing conditions.

Lazard is serving as financial advisor to HFI and GTA. Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP is serving as legal counsel to HFI and GTA, and Sidley Austin LLP is serving as legal counsel to Stonepeak.

### About GTA

GTA provides complete communications services in Guam, serving residential and business customers. These include mobility, internet access, IPTV and advanced data services for business. GTA operates data centers on Guam offering a secure and reliable networking environ-

ment for business data storage. The company also runs Guam's first locally owned cable landing station and data center in Piti.

Based in Tamuning, Guam, GTA is a U.S. and locally owned and managed company. For more information, please visit [www.gta.net](http://www.gta.net).

### About Huntsman Family Investments

Huntsman Family Investments is the private investment platform for the Jon M. Huntsman, Sr. family. Headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, Huntsman Family Investments seeks to make direct, long-term investments in diversified industries around the globe.

For more information, please visit [www.hfinvestments.com](http://www.hfinvestments.com).

### About Stonepeak

Stonepeak is a leading alternative investment firm specializing in infrastructure and real assets with approximately \$57.9 billion of assets under management. Through its investment in defensive, hard-asset businesses globally, Stonepeak aims to create value for its investors and portfolio companies, with a focus on downside protection and strong risk-adjusted returns. Stonepeak sponsors investment vehicles focused on private equity and credit. The firm provides capital, operational support, and committed partnership to grow investments in its target sectors, which include communications, energy and energy transition, transport and logistics, social infrastructure, and real estate. Stonepeak is headquartered in New York with offices in Hong Kong, Houston, London, Singapore, and Sydney. For more information, please visit [www.stonepeak.com](http://www.stonepeak.com). (*Business Wire*)



MARK RABAGO

NC Picks Saipan carries over 30 brands ranging from bags, shoes, to suitcases.



MARK RABAGO

Among the brands available at NC Picks Saipan are Nike, Under Armour, Adidas, Crocs, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Lacoste, Champion, Brooks Brothers, Maison Kitsune, Comme des Garçons, and Ami.



# Nation

## Immigration fuels uptick in US population growth

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)**—The number of immigrants to the U.S. jumped to the highest level in two decades this year, driving the nation's overall population growth, according to estimates released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The United States added 1.6 million people, more than two-thirds of which came from international migration, bringing the nation's population total to 334.9 million. It marks the second year in a row that immigration powered population gains.

A decline in the number of deaths since the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to the U.S. growth rate.

Population gains stem from immigration and births outpacing deaths.

After immigration declined in the latter half of last decade and dropped even lower amid pandemic-era restrictions, the number of immigrants last year bounced back to almost 1 million people. The trend continued this year as the nation added 1.1 million people.

The last time immigration surpassed 1.1 million people was in 2001, according to Census Bureau figures compiled by William Frey, a demographer at The Brookings Institution.

It is a sign of things to come. Without immigration, the U.S. population is projected to decline as deaths are forecast to outpace births by the late 2030s.

"The immigration piece is going to be the main source of growth in the future," Frey said.

The census determines how many U.S. congressional



AP  
The Miami skyline is viewed from the Rickenbacker Causeway in South Florida, Dec. 15, 2023.

seats each state gets. If trends continue through the 2030 count, California could lose four U.S. House seats and New York three. Texas could gain four seats and Florida could add three, according to an analysis by the Brennan Center for Justice.

While low by historical standards, 2023's half-percent growth rate was a slight uptick from the 0.4% rate last year and the less than 0.2% increase in 2021.

There were about 300,000 fewer deaths this year compared with a year earlier. That helped double the natural increase to more than 500,000 people in 2023, contributing

to the largest U.S. population gain since 2018, according to estimates that measure change from mid-2022 to mid-2023. The population increased in 42 states, up from last year's 31 states.

The vast majority of growth, 87%, came from the South, a region the Census Bureau defines as stretching from Texas to Maryland and Delaware. But the concentration of growth seen during the height of the pandemic in Texas, Florida, North Carolina and Georgia diminished in 2023.

"We peaked in the movement of people to those Sun Belt hotshots," Frey said. "It's tapering off a little bit."

South Carolina's 1.7% growth rate topped all other states, and its population rose by more than 90,000 residents. More than 90% of the growth came from domestic migration, or people moving from another U.S. state to South Carolina. Without domestic and international migration, the Palmetto State would have lost population in 2023 with almost 1,300 more deaths than births.

Florida had the next-highest growth rate at 1.6%, adding more than 365,000 residents. That was also the second-highest growth in terms of raw numbers. Only Texas surpassed it, gaining

more than 473,000 people. More people moved to Florida than any other's U.S. state this year, with the almost 373,000 movers about evenly split between domestic and international. Signifi-

## Trump banned from Colorado ballot in historic ruling by state's Supreme Court

**DENVER (AP)**—A divided Colorado Supreme Court on Tuesday declared former President Donald Trump ineligible for the White House under the U.S. Constitution's insurrection clause and removed him from the state's presidential primary ballot, setting up a likely showdown in the nation's highest court to decide whether the front-runner for the GOP nomination can remain in the race.

The decision from a court whose justices were all appointed by Democratic governors marks the first time in history that Section 3 of the 14th Amendment has been used to disqualify a presidential candidate.

"A majority of the court holds that Trump is disqualified from holding the office of president under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment," the court wrote in its 4-3 decision.

Colorado's highest court overturned a ruling from a district court judge who found that Trump incited an insurrection for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, but said he could not be barred from the ballot because it was unclear that the provision was intended to cover the presidency.

The court stayed its deci-

cantly fewer residents died in Florida compared to last year, leading to a natural decrease of only around 7,600 people.

Of the 50 states, New York had the biggest rate of population decline, losing 0.5%. It also recorded the largest decline in pure numbers, with a drop of almost 102,000 residents, although it marks a much smaller decline than last year's 180,000-person drop. The almost 74,000 international arrivals and the state's natural increase of more than 41,000 residents couldn't offset the almost 217,000 New Yorkers who departed the state from mid-2022 to mid-2023.

California was still the nation's most populous state, with 38.9 million residents, though it lost more than 75,000 residents this year. The decline was an improvement from the more than 113,000-person drop last year. Texas was the second most populous state with 30.5 million residents.

For the first time, Georgia surpassed 11 million people in 2023, joining only seven other states above that population threshold.

sion until Jan. 4, or until the U.S. Supreme Court rules on the case. Colorado officials say the issue must be settled by Jan. 5, the deadline for the state to print its presidential primary ballots.

"We do not reach these conclusions lightly," wrote the court's majority. "We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach."

Trump's attorneys had promised to appeal any disqualification immediately to the nation's highest court, which has the final say about constitutional matters.

Trump's legal spokeswoman Alina Habba said in a statement Tuesday night: "This ruling, issued by the Colorado Supreme Court, attacks the very heart of this nation's democracy. It will not stand, and we trust that the Supreme Court will reverse this unconstitutional order."

Trump didn't mention the decision during a rally Tuesday evening in Waterloo, Iowa, but his campaign sent out a fundraising email citing what it called a "tyrannical ruling."

## Groups sue over the new Texas law that lets police arrest migrants who enter US illegally

**AUSTIN, Texas (AP)**—The White House and Mexico's president on Tuesday came out strongly against a new Texas law that would allow police to arrest migrants who illegally cross into the U.S. and empower local judges to order them to leave the country.

Also Tuesday, civil rights groups and Texas' largest border county filed a lawsuit, calling the measure that Republican Gov. Greg Abbott had signed into law less than 24 hours earlier an unconstitutional reach over the U.S. government's authority on immigration.

The Texas law that takes effect in March could be a test of how aggressively a state can limit immigration amid a surge in illegal crossings in remote areas that has escalated pressure on Congress to reach a deal on asylum. Abbott said Tuesday that Texas

is going to such dramatic lengths because of frustration over the Biden administration's immigration policies.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre criticized the state's approach as extreme and dehumanizing to immigrants. She would not say whether the Justice Department would challenge the law.

"This is not who we are as a country," she said.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Austin, was brought by El Paso County along with the American Civil Liberties Union and the Texas Civil Rights Project. It was filed against the head of the Texas Department of Public Safety, whose troopers could arrest migrants, and the El Paso County district attorney, whose office would potentially prosecute cases in that border community.

El Paso County District Attorney Bill Hicks said he woke

up Tuesday morning having no idea he would be sued by his own county. He told reporters that the lawsuit could reach the U.S. Supreme Court, a scenario that some Texas Republicans welcome even as they defend the law as constitutional.

A DPS spokesperson declined to comment in an email Tuesday, citing the pending litigation.

Abbott signed the law Monday in front of a section of border fence in Brownville. He was flanked by two signs in English and Spanish: "Warning! It is illegal to cross here. Punishable by removal or imprisonment."

Republican state Rep. David Spiller, who carried the law in the Texas House, said in an interview Tuesday that the vast majority of arrests under the law would occur within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the border, though it could be enforced statewide. He said there

needs to be evidence of someone crossing illegally, whether it be an officer who witnesses it firsthand or footage from border cameras.

"I believe that Texas and other states have the absolute right to enforce their borders," Spiller said.

Illegal crossings have topped 10,000 on some days this month, according to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol acting commissioner Troy Miller, who has called the number of daily arrivals "unprecedented."

The measure allows any Texas law enforcement officer to arrest people who are suspected of entering the country illegally. Once in custody, they could either agree to a Texas judge's order to leave the U.S. or be prosecuted on misdemeanor charges of illegal entry. Migrants who don't leave could face arrest again under more serious felony charges.



# World

## Israeli airstrikes kill dozens more across the Gaza Strip

**RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)**—The Israeli army has raided and detained staff at two of the last functioning hospitals in Gaza's north, where the defense minister said Tuesday that troops were working to completely clear out Hamas militants.

Israel bombarded towns across southern Gaza Tuesday with airstrikes, killing at least 45

Palestinians and pressing ahead with its offensive with renewed backing from the United States, despite rising international alarm. The Israeli defense minister, Yoav Gallant, warned the campaign in Gaza's south will persist for months.

In a hospital in the southern town of Rafah, Mahmoud Zoarab bid farewell to his two

children—a 2-year-old boy, and a girl born two weeks ago—killed in a predawn strike on their home.

Wounded in the strike, he winced as he peeled back the shrouds to look at their faces as his wife and mother stood by his bed.

"Just two weeks old. Her name hadn't even been reg-

istered," said the children's grandmother, Suzan Zoarab. Addressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, she cried, "Does he think that by killing these children he will achieve something? Have they succeeded now? Has he achieved what he wants?"

Defense Minister Gallant said Israeli forces were entering Hamas' tunnel network in northern Gaza as part of a "final clearing" of militants from the region. The densely built urban north, including Gaza City, has seen ferocious fighting between troops and militants, with Palestinian health officials reporting dozens of people killed in bombardment in recent days.

Israeli troops have raided a series of hospitals and shelters in the north, detaining men in a search for militants and expelling others taking refuge there.

Gallant said that in southern Gaza, operations will take "months," including the military's assault on Khan Younis, the territory's second largest city. "We will not stop until we reach our goals," he said.

After meeting with Israeli officials Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin urged

Israel to protect civilians but reiterated America's support for Israel in its war against Hamas, saying he was "not here to dictate timelines or terms."

Austin's remarks signaled that the U.S. would continue shielding Israel from growing international calls for a ceasefire as the U.N. Security Council again delayed a vote—and would keep providing aid for one of the 21st century's deadliest military campaigns.

Suzan Zoarab said her family was asleep when their home was hit before dawn.

"We found the whole house had collapsed over us." Twenty-seven people were killed in the strike, along with at least three others in a separate strike in Rafah, according to Associated Press journalists who saw the bodies arrive at two local hospitals early Tuesday.

Rafah, which is in the southern part of Gaza and where Israel has told Palestinians to seek shelter, has been repeatedly bombarded, often killing large numbers of civilians. Israel said Tuesday it had killed a prominent Hamas financier in an airstrike on Rafah, without specifying when it occurred.

In central Gaza, at least 15 people were killed in strikes overnight, according to hospital records. Among the dead were a mother and her four children, who were killed as they sat around a fire, according to an AP reporter who filmed the aftermath.

Fierce battles also raged in northern Gaza, which has been reduced to a wasteland seven weeks after Israeli tanks and troops stormed in. The military said Tuesday its forces took "operational control" of the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya. Israel has killed hundreds of Hamas militants there and detained another 500 suspected militants, according to a statement from division commander Brig. Gen. Itsik Cohen.

The claims could not be independently confirmed.

Footage online showed a scene of devastation after a strike that hit a local charity in Jabaliya, with several torn bodies near a donkey cart on a street filled with rubble and twisted metal. At least 27 people were killed in that strike and others in the district Tuesday, according to Munir al-Bursh, a senior Health Ministry official.

## Russia ratchets up military pressure on Ukraine as Putin expects the West's support to dwindle

After blunting Ukraine's counteroffensive from the summer, Russia is building up its resources for a new stage of the war over the winter, which could involve trying to extend its gains in the east and deal significant blows to the country's vital infrastructure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be hoping that relentless military pressure, combined with changing Western political dynamics and a global focus on the Israeli-Hamas war, will drain support for Ukraine in the nearly 2-year-old war and force Kyiv to yield to Moscow's demands.

"As far as the Russian leadership is concerned, the confrontation with the West has reached a turning point: The Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed, Russia is more confident than ever, and the cracks in Western solidarity are spreading," said Tatiana Stanovaya, senior fellow with Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, in a recent analysis.

An aid package for Ukraine

has stalled in the U.S. Congress as Republicans insist on linking any more money to U.S.-Mexico border security changes opposed by Democrats. The European Union last week failed to agree on a \$54 billion package in financial help that Ukraine desperately needs.

Amid these signs of fraying Western support, Russia has ramped up its pressure on Ukrainian forces on several parts of the more than 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line.

"The Russian military since October has been trying to seize initiative across the front in a couple of areas," said Michael Kofman, a military expert with the Carnegie Endowment.

Ukraine's military needs to reconstitute and regenerate its combat effectiveness after a grueling five-month counteroffensive, he said.

"Ukrainian forces, while motivated, are exhausted," Kofman said in a recent podcast. "They've lost a lot of units of action. They've lost a lot of assault capable troops."

One area where Russia has maintained steady pressure is the northeastern city of Kupiansk, a strategically important rail hub that Moscow captured early in the war and then lost in a Ukrainian counteroffensive in September 2022. While Russian forces have failed to make any significant gains in the area, Ukraine has had to maintain a significant force to protect the city.

Starting in early October, Russian troops also have launched an offensive around Avdiivka, a town near Donetsk, the center of the region that was seized by Moscow-backed rebels in 2014 and illegally annexed by Russia in 2022 with three other Ukrainian regions.

Ukraine has built multiple defenses in Avdiivka, complete with concrete fortifications and a web of underground tunnels, allowing them to repel fierce Russian attacks. Despite massive losses, Russian troops have inched forward steadily, seeking to envelop Avdiivka and cut Ukrainian supply lines. (AP)

their house in Yangwa, a village in Gansu province. His father pulled Ma's son, whose back was injured, out of the rubble. His uncle said they heard the earthquake and then the house started collapsing. "We crawled out in fear," the uncle, Ma Chengming, said. About 80,000 people have been resettled in Gansu, a provincial official said at a Wednesday news conference. Many spent the night in relief tents delivered to the area as temperatures plunged well below freezing.

### N. Korea and Russia clash with US, S. Korea and allies over Pyongyang's latest missile launch

**UNITED NATIONS (AP)**—North Korea and Russia clashed with the United States, South Korea and their allies at an emergency U.N. Security Council meeting Tuesday on Pyongyang's latest intercontinental ballistic missile launch, which it called "a warning counter-measure" to threats

from the U.S. and other hostile forces. North Korean Ambassador Kim Song said this is "the most dangerous year" in the military-security landscape on the Korean Peninsula, pointing to stepped up U.S.-South Korean military exercises and the U.S. deployment of nuclear-powered submarines and other nuclear assets to the area that have raised a "nuclear war danger." The U.S. and nine allies pointed to five North Korean ICBM launches, over 25 ballistic missiles launches and three satellite launches using ballistic missile technology this year, violating multiple Security Council resolutions and threatening "the peace and stability of its neighbors and the international community." In a statement read just before the council meeting by U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood, surrounded by diplomats from the other countries, the 10 countries condemned the latest ICBM launch on Dec. 18 and all launches before it.


### ASIAN BRIEFS

#### China's earthquake survivors endure frigid temperatures and mourn the dead

**YANGWA, China (AP)**—Surrounded by destruction, the relatives of an earthquake victim mourned her death Wednesday in temporary shelters and frigid temperatures high in the mountains of northwest China. Houses caved in and crumbled in a Monday night earthquake that killed at least 131 people and injured more than 900 others, Chinese media reports said. Most of the casualties were in Gansu province and the rest in the neighboring province of Qinghai. In the predawn darkness, Ma Lianqiang stood next to the body of his deceased wife wrapped in blankets in a tent-like temporary shelter lit by a single overhead light. His wife was hit and buried by debris in her mother's house, where she had gone to stay because she was ill. Ma and other members of his extended family survived despite extensive damage to

On December 15, 2023,

† *Ms. Merced "Set" Muna Borja*



was found passed away in her residence in San Vicente Village. Worried for she has not answered telephone calls nor normally active on her social media for several days, her siblings asked for a wellness check and received the worst.

Merced was born on September 24, 1955, at the Naval Infirmary on Saipan. From 1962 until 1977, Merced grew up in Tamuning Guam. She graduated from John F. Kennedy High School in 1974 and she worked in the tourism industry on Guam.

She returned to Saipan in 1977 initially to help with the family's small business, then she began her lifelong career in the insurance industry starting as an office assistant and then culminating with a final title as Insurance Adjustor; with Calvo's Insurance Saipan and Guam Insurance Adjustor's, Inc.

Merced is a meticulous person who prides herself on getting the job done. She often worried her parents because she frequently stayed very late at work. When her parents checked, there at her desk they found her busy with completing her tasks so that her clients received the best service they deserved. A no nonsense person, she is found to be helpful and caring indicative of the traits she got from her mom. But those who got on her wrong side, she quickly showed a quick sharp tongue of a daughter who learned from a man who served as a WWII US Marine Corps Scout.

She is preceded in death by her parents Gregorio Flores "Palau" Borja and Catalina Tudela "Cutie" Muna Borja; maternal grandparents Sebastian Palacios "Bastian" Muna and Rosa Sablan "Pakito Te" Tudela Muna; paternal grandparents Juan de Leon Guerrero "Lalu Sumai" de Borja and Rosa Aguan "Budoki Cabeza" Flores; and her sister Angelina and her baby brother Gregorio.



# Environment

ACCORDING TO THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION:

## After years of decline, environmental enforcement is on the upswing

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Environmental Protection Agency conducted more on-site inspections of polluting industrial sites this year than any time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency said Monday as it seeks to reinvigorate its enforcement program after more than a decade of budget cuts.

EPA opened nearly 200 criminal investigations this year, a 70% increase over 2022, the agency said in a report. It completed nearly 1,800 civil settlements, a 9% increase over 2022. More than half the inspections and settlements involved poor and disadvantaged communities long scarred by pollution, the agency said, reflecting the Biden administration's emphasis on environmental justice issues.

But some parts of EPA's enforcement efforts still lag. In 2023, for example, it charged 102 defendants criminally. The Trump administration charged more every year, although most years only marginally. Nearly 200 defendants were charged in the latter years of the Obama administration. There is, however, an uptick in the number of criminal cases they've opened recently.



A black plume rises over East Palestine, Ohio, as a result of a controlled detonation of a portion of the derailed Norfolk Southern trains, Feb. 6, 2023. The Biden administration is initiating a formal evaluation of risks posed by vinyl chloride, the cancer-causing chemical that burned in a towering plume of toxic black smoke following a fiery train derailment earlier this year in eastern Ohio.

EPA said its enforcement and compliance work have resulted in the reduction, treatment, elimination or minimization of 1.84 billion pounds of pollutants, and required violators to pay over \$704 million in penalties, fines, and restitution. The dollar amount is a 57% increase over 2022.

The increase comes as

EPA's enforcement staff remains far below its peak of more than a decade ago, even as officials move to add about 300 positions. EPA eliminated approximately 950 enforcement positions following budget cuts imposed since 2011.

The 2011 budget and debt deal, which included automatic spending cuts, "hit all

agencies hard, but hit EPA especially hard," said David Uhlmann, EPA's assistant administrator for enforcement. Enforcement efforts were further hampered by an inability to complete many on-site inspections during the pandemic, which began nearly four years ago, and a series of actions by former President

Donald Trump to roll back environmental regulations.

"While our work is not complete, EPA's revitalized enforcement program is making a positive difference in communities across America, particularly for people living in underserved and overburdened communities that for too long have borne the brunt of pollution," Uhlmann said in a statement.

Uhlmann, who was confirmed as EPA's enforcement chief in July after a two-year delay, said in an interview that enforcement efforts are "still a struggle" at the environmental agency.

"We can't replace a decade of staff cuts in one year, but I feel good that enforcement levels are back up to where they were prior to the pandemic," he said.

"EPA has increased enforcement activities across the nation," he said. "Polluters who broke the law are being brought to justice."

EPA sued Norfolk Southern railway over a train derailment in eastern Ohio that spilled hazardous chemicals and forced thousands of people to evacuate. Federal officials want to ensure the company

pays for the cleanup.

The agency also sued Denka Performance Elastomer LLC, arguing that its petrochemical operations in southern Louisiana posed an unacceptable cancer risk to the mostly-Black community nearby. The EPA has demanded that the company reduce toxic emissions from its plant that makes synthetic rubber.

The Biden administration also went to court to try to help the troubled Jackson, Mississippi, water system, which suffered a near-total collapse in 2022 after a heavy rainstorm.

In May, the EPA reached a deal with a BP subsidiary that required the company to reduce harmful pollution from its refinery in Indiana. The company also agreed to pay a \$40 million penalty under the Clean Air Act.

The agency has set climate change and environmental justice as top priorities for enforcement, along with dangerous chemicals known as PFAS that are linked to a broad range of health issues, coal ash contamination, safe drinking water, prevention of toxic air pollution and chemical accident prevention, Uhlmann said.

## As the climate warms, that perfect Christmas tree may depend on growers' ability to adapt

CHICAGO (AP)—Christmas tree breeder Jim Rockis knows what it looks like when one dies long before it can reach a buyer.

Rockis farms trees in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, where he and other producers often grow their iconic evergreens outside their preferred habitat higher in the mountains. But that can mean planting in soil that's warmer and wetter—places where a nasty fungal disease called Phytophthora root rot can take hold, sucking moisture away from saplings and causing needles to crisp to burnt orange.

"After a while, it just gets to the core of it," Rockis said. "They just wither away."

Christmas tree growers and breeders have long prepared for a future of hotter weather that will change soil conditions, too. People buying trees may not have noticed a difference in availability this year and may not even in the next couple; the average Christmas tree takes eight to 10 years to reach marketable size.

But that means the trees

being grown right now are the beloved holiday traditions of tomorrow for millions of families.

"You've got to start thinking about how you are going to adapt to this," Rockis said.

That's why researchers like Gary Chastagner, a Washington State University professor called "Dr. Christmas Tree" for his decades of work on firs and other festive species, have been working with breeders like Rockis to see if species from other parts of the world—for instance, Turkish fir—are better adapted to conditions being wrought by climate change.

In the past two years, surprisingly high numbers of evergreens died of fungal disease outbreaks in Washington and Oregon. Chastagner has been concerned that changing soil temperature and moisture "may change the frequency at which we would see some Phytophthora that are more adapted to warmer soil conditions." Some may attack trees even more aggressively, he added.

Chastagner and his team are



Gary Chastagner, a Washington State University professor called "Dr. Christmas Tree" shows an example of a less-desirable tree due to fewer top branches, grown in a small plantation of Turkish fir trees to produce disease and insect-resistant Christmas trees at the school's Puyallup Research and Extension Center on Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023, in Puyallup, Wash.

doing more sampling work to understand the causes of these outbreaks and whether they represent a pattern that could extend into the future.

But some scientists say there isn't enough research on warming soil temperatures that could affect Christmas trees and many other crops, especially trees.

A European study this year in the journal Nature Climate Change found that soil heat

extremes are increasing faster than air heat extremes, which can affect the health of grasslands, forests and some agricultural areas.

The same weather conditions that can put trees under stress favor many pests and diseases that can attack them, such as insects and fungi. The changes in forests and farm fields might not happen overnight, said Bert Cregg, a professor of horticulture and

forestry at Michigan State University. But over time with a warming climate, "some trees may become more difficult to grow," he said.

Changes in soils also have implications for soil carbon storage, a climate change solution that the U.S. has already put a lot of money and effort into researching. Warmer soil temperatures reduce its long-term carbon storage ability, partly because microscopic life underground is affected, researchers say.

"The activity of these microbes usually increases with temperature, so it's less stable to store carbon there," said Almudena Garcia-Garcia, one of the Nature Climate Change authors and a postdoctoral scientist at the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research—UFZ in Leipzig, Germany.

Although getting more information on how changing soils will affect crops and carbon alike is vital, scientists sometimes struggle to get enough data, said Melissa Widhalm, associate director and regional climatologist

at Purdue University's Midwestern Regional Climate Center. Since soil temperature is measured differently than air temperature, the records don't go back very far, making it difficult to understand long-term trends.

Widhalm, who was not involved with the Nature Climate Change research, said she wished more studies like it existed in other places like North America, and that the results are compelling because they combined physical observations in the ground with satellite data and computer simulations. "This paper did a nice job quantifying soil temperature-moisture relationships that scientists know exist but are difficult to measure," she said.

Garcia-Garcia said her team plans to study soil temperature changes more in the future, in more locations if they can. "All the sources of information indicate this is happening," she said. "We are always studying extreme events from measurements in the air. But what is happening below our feet?"



# Life & Style

## She bought a vase at Goodwill for \$3.99. It sold at auction for \$107,000

By **BEN FINLEY**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jessica Vincent had just started surveying the shelves of a Virginia thrift store when a vase caught her eye. It was shaped like a bottle and had ribbons of color, aqua green and amethyst purple, that spiraled up its glass surface like stripes of paint.

The piece looked old amongst the clutter of measuring cups, candles and other tchotchkes. After adjusting her eyes, Vincent made out the words “Murano” and “Italia” on its base.

“I bought it thinking it would look beautiful in my house somewhere,” said Vincent, 43, a horse trainer who paid \$3.99 at a Goodwill outside of Richmond. “I definitely didn’t buy it thinking, ‘Oh, I’m going to sell this.’”

Her thinking changed after some research. And on Dec. 13, the vase sold through the Wright Auction House for \$107,100. The buyer, a top collector from Europe, wished to remain private.

Vincent’s purchase came after years of perusing yard sales and thrift stores with her mother. She loves PBS’ “Antiques Roadshow” and has daydreamed many times of this kind of lottery ticket-level transaction.

“I always felt like I had a good eye,” said Vincent, who visits thrift stores a few times a week with her partner. “But I’m really surprised that nobody picked it up before I did.”

The vase was likely on the shelf for only a couple days given its quality and the quick rate at which products are sold, said Laura Faison, a spokeswoman for Goodwill of Central and



This image provided by Jessica Vincent shows Jessica Vincent holding a vase by Italian architect and designer Carlo Scarpa which was part of his Pennelette series in the 1940s at her home in Henrico County, Virginia.

Coastal Virginia. Each store averages about 2,000 new pieces a day, and they often come in from a car’s trunk.

“It could have been someone cleaning out grandma’s basement,” Faison said of the vase’s backstory. “We’ll probably never know.”

Vincent arrived at the Goodwill on a June afternoon with her partner, Naza Acosta, after a day of training horses. The vase felt heavy in her hands. And while Vincent had seen painted glass before, the vase’s swirling colors were different. They came from the glass itself, she said, “and it

was just so delicately done.”

Back home, Vincent posted photos in Facebook groups for glass art and soon joined a private one for Murano glass.

The “Murano” on the vase’s bottom referred to the island in Venice that has been famous for its glasswork since the 13th century. Its highly prized creations have included ornate crystal chandeliers and mirror frames, many of which adorn the palaces of Europe’s aristocracy.

The vase was produced by the renowned glass company Venini and designed by Italian architect Carlo Scarpa,

who died in 1978. One response on Facebook gave her chills: “Those are very rare. Every collector would love to have that. But most people cannot afford them.”

Vincent was referred to Richard Wright, president of the Wright Auction House in Chicago.

“The minute I saw her email,”

Wright said, “I knew what it was and how rare it was.”

Scarpa was the top Italian glass designer in the mid-20th century, while the vase was part of a series he created in 1942. The collection was called Pennelette, which means brush-stroke, and was made by adding colored opaque glass to the vase as it was blown.

“It was basically a duet between Carlo Scarpa and a master blower who had to physically translate (Scarpa’s) drawings,” Wright said. “You have to keep rotating this vase the entire time or it’ll slump off the pipe. While at the same time you’re applying these delicate brushes of color that have this absolute lightness to them.”

### SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

#### Nevada high court upholds sex abuse charges against 'Dances With Wolves' actor Nathan Chasing Horse

**LAS VEGAS (AP)**—The Nevada Supreme Court has denied Nathan Chasing Horse’s request to toss a sprawling indictment that accuses the former “Dances With Wolves” actor of leading a cult, taking underage wives and sexually abusing Indigenous women and girls for decades. The court’s decision means prosecutors can proceed with their 18-count criminal case after months of delayed proceedings while Chasing Horse challenged it. The 47-year-old has been in custody since his arrest in January near the North Las Vegas home he is said to have shared with five wives. Chasing Horse pleaded not guilty to the charges, which include sexual assault of a minor, kidnapping and child abuse. His lawyers argued that the case should be dismissed because, the former actor said, the sexual encounters were consensual. One of his accusers was younger than 16, the age of consent in Nevada, when the alleged abuse began, authorities said. Chasing Horse is known for his portrayal of Smiles a Lot in the 1990 film

“Dances with Wolves.”

#### Ex-gang leader seeking release from Las Vegas jail ahead of trial in 1996 killing of Tupac Shakur

**LAS VEGAS (AP)**—A former Los Angeles-area gang leader charged with murder in the killing of hip-hop music icon Tupac Shakur in Las Vegas is deriding the case against him as the product of speculation and second-hand testimony as he asks a judge to put him on house arrest ahead of his trial. A Jan. 2 hearing date was set Tuesday on Duane “Keffe D” Davis’ bid to be released on no more than \$100,000 bail. His court-appointed attorneys wrote that the health of their 60-year-old client has deteriorated in jail and that he is not getting proper medical attention following a bout with colon cancer that they said is in remission. “His diet and lack of exercise in the jail, given his age and medical history, is negatively impacting his health,” deputy special public defenders Robert Arroyo and Charles Cano said in the bail motion filed Thursday before Clark County District Court Judge Carli Kiemy. Davis, originally from Compton, California, was

arrested Sept. 29 outside a Las Vegas-area home where police served a search warrant July 17.

#### Publishers association struggled to find willing recipient of Freedom to Publish Award

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Book publishers are facing so much government pressure worldwide that one trade group was unable to find anyone willing to accept its annual International Freedom to Publish Award. Instead, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) is honoring “all publishing houses in multiple countries and regions of the world that continued to publish” in the face of opposition this year. “This year we heard from numerous publishers from various parts of the world who were grateful to be considered for recognition, but who also live in fear of the additional scrutiny, harassment, and danger that such an honor might bring,” Terry Adams, who chairs the AAP’s Freedom to Publish Committee, said in a statement Tuesday. “As a result, this year’s award is for the many houses who quietly fight the battle for free expression under impossibly difficult circumstances.”

## Elderly mother considers helping out her daughter

**DEAR ABBY:** How can I help my financially drowning, 57-year-old daughter without being pulled under myself? I live comfortably now, but that could change in an instant with a stroke or a fall and the need for assisted living.

My daughter had been employed throughout her adult life but was recently part of a group layoff. She has failed to find another job in her field, and her benefits have run out. I don’t blame her for the job loss, but I do think she could have been earning some money by working part-time. She didn’t do that until the benefit well had run dry.

I “loaned” her some money but have made it clear that it will be short-lived. She hasn’t asked for my opinion but, boy, do I ever want to give it. She would have had a nice financial cushion had she not blown a \$300K inheritance some years back.

I feel guilty going out to lunch with friends or buying something unnecessary for the house when she’s close to being homeless. My house is large enough for my daughter to live here, but she has I-don’t-know-how-many dogs (she hides the number). Am I awful for living my life (well) while she flounders? Is there help for her?

MEAN MOM IN TEXAS

**DEAR MOM:** At 57, your daughter is an adult. She, not you, is responsible for the poor choices she has made, including blowing her inheritance and not immediately looking to

add to her benefits before they ran out. You are not “awful” for living your life, so stop flagellating.

**Tell your daughter she may need to find a job that pays less than the one she lost. This is a fact of life for many people. And if she needs to move in with you, draw the line at how many dogs she can bring with her, and make the responsibility of finding safe homes for the rest hers.**

**DEAR ABBY:** I left my husband of 17 years six months ago. He is a good man, loyal, funny, bright and successful, but a complex person with a history of trauma who is hard-wired to always see the negative. He’s very rigid and critical, and he has a need to control everything. I love him, but I am not drawn to him physically or emotionally. We have done couples counseling numerous times.

He desperately wants me back, so he’s now doing everything in his power to dig deep and change. It kills me to see him in such emotional pain. We have young children who want us to reunite. Our families want us back together. He’s making progress, but I still have no desire to be with him, and I haven’t for a long time. Any wisdom would be greatly appreciated.

BEYOND CONFUSED IN OREGON

**DEAR BEYOND CONFUSED:** It’s sad to say, but your husband could twist himself into a pretzel and it wouldn’t

## DEAR ABBY

By **Abigail Van Buren**  
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*



**change the fact that you are no longer attracted to him physically or emotionally. You may need some sessions with a licensed psychotherapist before you deliver the news, because the time has come to be honest with him about your feelings (or lack of them) so he can move on with his life.**

■■■

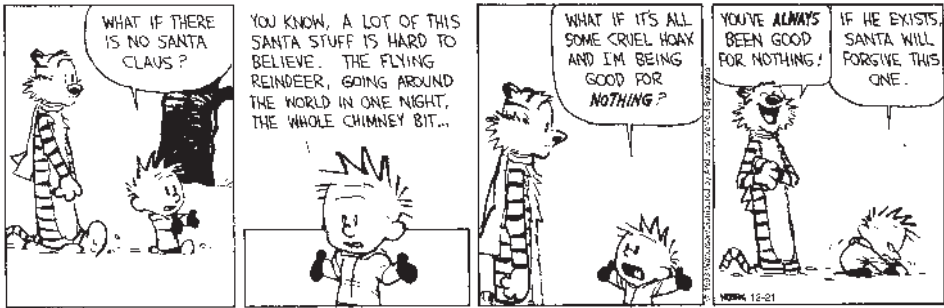
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# Pastimes

## Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



## Garfield®

By Jim Davis



## Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



## The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



## CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

- 1 Assess
- 5 Blue-print
- 9 Furry foot
- 12 Mountain goat
- 13 Off-quoted Berra
- 14 Inventor Whitney
- 15 Prepare, as coffee
- 17 Hog-wash
- 18 Regard highly
- 19 Bistros
- 21 There-fore
- 22 Loon's cousin
- 24 Sulk
- 27 Buddy
- 28 Canyon sound
- 31 Enzyme suffix
- 32 Ad- (impro-vice)
- 33 Up to
- 34 Street edge
- 36 Multi-purpose truck

**DOWN**

- 37 Get one's feet wet?
- 38 Shoe parts
- 40 Egyptian sun god
- 41 "Trea-sure"
- 42 Singer Mars
- 43 Extant
- 47 Grazing tract
- 48 Outer boundary
- 51 Hoosier st.
- 52 Lamb alias
- 53 San —, Italy
- 54 "Ulalume" writer
- 55 Speed
- 56 Urban haze
- 1 Morning co-host Kelly
- 2 Sleeping
- 3 School session
- 4 Cut out
- 5 Gomer of classic TV
- 6 Mauna —
- 7 Literary rep
- 8 Bridget Fonda, to Jane
- 9 Type of bet
- 10 Skin cream
- 11 Sanity
- 16 Acapulco gold
- 20 Honest politician
- 22 Southern side dish
- 23 Judicial garb
- 24 PC alter-native
- 25 Buck-eyes' sch.
- 26 Win over
- 27 Sad
- 29 Secreted
- 30 World Cup cheer
- 35 "— voyage!"
- 37 Vacillates
- 39 "I'm Real" singer
- 40 Crater part
- 41 Radar image
- 42 Gambling city
- 43 Actor Neeson
- 44 Detail
- 45 Jules Verne captain
- 46 Pirate's drink
- 49 "Xanadu" band
- 50 Carnival city

**Solution time: 24 mins.**

**Yesterdays answer 12-21**

**CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:** Steven Yeun, 40; Ray Romano, 66; Samuel L. Jackson, 75; Jane Fonda, 86.

**Happy Birthday:** Action is the path forward. Stop complaining and start doing. Change what you don't like, and protect and nurture what makes you happy. Life is about choices, and it's time for you to step up and make a difference. Get involved in interest groups and connect with people who want to contribute to your cause. Don't be afraid to show your emotions or stand up for your rights. Your numbers are 2, 5, 17, 24, 31, 39, 44.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Reunions, trips and fun with friends are on the horizon. At the very least, contact someone you miss and catch up or plan to get together. Speaking from the heart will open up a new possibility that can improve your lifestyle. \*\*\*

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** Look for a window of opportunity, and you will gain insight into something you want to pursue. A change of plans will bring you closer to someone you love. Be innovative, and you'll devise a plan that helps you reach your goal. \*\*\*

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Know who you are dealing with before entering negotiations. Question anything that doesn't sound feasible. Look out for your interests and tidy up your business to avoid being penalized with late fees. \*\*\*\*

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** You may not favor a change, but if you refrain from overreacting and let situations unfold naturally, you will benefit. Turn your attention to doing things that make you happy, like spending time with loved ones, implementing

self-improvements or making a kind gesture. \*\*

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** Set your sights on what you want and make it happen. An enthusiastic approach to getting ahead will win points and encourage you to network with people you consider beneficial to your cause. Keep an open mind and a realistic attitude. Avoid a health risk. \*\*\*\*\*

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** Refuse to let an incident stop you from taking advantage of an opportunity to learn, make extra money or improve your domestic life. You have plenty to gain if you are resourceful, find out the facts and head in a direction that offers benefits. \*\*\*\*\*

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Keep your thoughts to yourself. Concentrate on what you must get done before the festive break; being patient with others and going about your business without conflict will be easier then. A unique approach to how you earn or handle your money looks promising. \*\*\*

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** You'll have good ideas when trying to please others. A shopping spree will be less stressful if you have a budget. A close relationship will get a boost if you share your intentions. Sharing and caring will encourage a better lifestyle. \*\*\*

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Join the festivities, be charitable and let your actions speak for you. How you deal with others will determine how they treat you in return. Let your heart lead the way and your conscience be your guide. A surprise is heading your way. \*\*\*\*\*

## EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Be careful what you promise. Emotional fallout will occur if you don't follow through. Have a plan in place and the backup you need to get things done on time. Serious talks will lead to unexpected opportunities. \*\*

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** Keep your costs and expectations reasonable. Look at how and where you can make headway and a difference to yourself and your loved ones. Join forces with like-minded people and make a difference through kind gestures and spreading joy. \*\*\*\*\*

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** Discipline will pay off. You can make financial gains if you are productive, diligent and go about your business. Refuse to let anyone sidetrack or pressure you into something you don't want to do. An investment or financial gain looks promising. \*\*\*

**Birthday Baby:** You are practical, generous and speedy. You are imaginative and persuasive.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

## SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	3		5		4		2		
5		4	8		9				
9	8		6		1	3	5		
		6		4		7		9	
			2	9		6	1	8	
					6			3	
				1					
		3	4	6			9		
1			7	2	3			4	

Difficulty: ★★★

12/21

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	5	4	3	1	9	7	2	8
3	2	7	6	5	8	1	9	4
1	8	9	7	2	4	3	6	5
9	4	6	2	8	7	5	1	3
7	1	2	5	9	3	8	4	6
5	3	8	1	4	6	2	7	9
8	7	3	9	6	2	4	5	1
4	6	1	8	7	5	9	3	2
2	9	5	4	3	1	6	8	7

Difficulty: ★★★

12/20

## WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

**HOW TO PLAY:** All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

**RE-GIFTING** Solution: 9 letters

T E D S G U M S R E T S A O ©  
O R S O L G Y R E L T U C A ©  
Y J A A O R E D N E L B N P ©  
S O F D V G E S K I F D E A ©  
P U R S E M N N A R L E N R E  
F R A E S L A I I E T T G T R  
S N C S T L G E H W T A O Y A  
G A S W B S N N R T E L L A W  
N L T O C D A N I C O P O D N  
I A E L S A R O O R D L C I E  
T M K L D G I F T I K N C L H  
N P S I T E G D U B T S A O C  
I S A P L A N T S B S O I H T  
A L B U M S E I K O O C L R I  
P A O S N I K P A N O R P A K

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**Yesterday's Answer: Pursuit**  
The NEW Treasury 67 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480, (in Canada, call 1-855-232-2367).

## STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.



# Morant scores 34 in return from ban, hits buzzer-beater to lift Grizzlies over Pelicans



**NEW ORLEANS** (AP)—Ja Morant ended his regrettable absence from professional basketball with a comeback for the ages.

Morant capped a stirring, 34-point season debut with a spinning dribble in the lane to set up a game-winning floater as time expired in the Memphis Grizzlies' 115-113 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Tuesday night.

The Grizzlies, who entered on a five-game skid and were 6-19 during Morant's 25-game suspension for his social media antics with guns, trailed by 24 in the first half but took a 113-111 lead on Morant's inside basket with 1:22 to go.

The Pelicans tied it and the teams exchanged missed 3-pointers before Morant finished it off at the horn, leaving much of the crowd stunned as he and his teammates celebrated under the basket.

"I've been putting work in, man," Morant said. "I ain't play a game in eight months. Had a lot of time to learn myself. A lot of hard days where I went through it. But you know, basketball is my life—what I love, therapeutic for me. And I'm just excited to be back."

Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins designed the winning play for Morant and called the two-time All-Star's execution of it, "a special play



Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant (12) goes to the basket between New Orleans Pelicans forward Herbert Jones (5) and guard Dyson Daniels for the game winning shot at the buzzer in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023.

by a special player."

Morant's point total was the most in NBA history by a player coming back from an absence of at least 25 games.

"He was able to do whatever he wanted," Pelicans forward Zion Williamson said. "Ja was able to get downhill a lot. Him doing that opened up the game for the rest of them."

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 24

points and Desmond Bane had 21 for Memphis, which also snapped the Pelicans' four-game winning streak.

Brandon Ingram scored 34 points for New Orleans, but Williamson's time on the court was limited to 24 minutes by foul trouble and he finished with just 13 points.

"BI was great. He made plays for himself, for his

teammates, made big basket after big basket," Pelicans coach Willie Green said. "Unfortunately, we just didn't do enough."

Morant was booed heartily by partisan Pelicans fans during pregame introductions and also when he handled the ball on the opening possession.

Those boos died down as the game wore on, and a section

of visiting fans near the Memphis bench made themselves heard as Morant explosively scored eight points—twice hitting difficult driving shots as he was fouled—in a span of 1:20 early in the third quarter.

"My one expectation was for him to have fun," Jenkins said. "That's how you want Ja to play, is play fast and free with the dynamic abilities."

## Long losing streaks are uncomfortable for NBA players

By **PAT GRAHAM A**  
AP SPORTS WRITER

Victor Wembanyama has adjusted to many things—food, culture, double teams—since the top pick's arrival with the San Antonio Spurs.

There's just no getting accustomed to all the losing.

Pick an NBA player's name, any name, and they're not hardwired for skids. Players like Wembanyama have typically always been on winning teams before coming to the league, not ones that stack up defeats at historic rates. For Wembanyama, along with youngsters like Cade Cunningham and Ausar Thompson in Detroit and Bilal Coulibaly of Washington, losing has become part of their NBA education.

Misery does love company, and the Pistons, who lost their 24th straight game Monday night, have some in the Spurs and Wizards. Despite the presence of Wembanyama, the Spurs have dropped 19 of 20, while the Wizards are in the midst of losing 17 of 19.

"Sometimes, you'll be in a game and maybe think about the losing streak and causes you to do a little extra or just do something you wouldn't nor-

mally do," Thompson recently said. "Panic a little bit."

Thompson's certainly not used to this. He won a state title in high school, along with two titles with Overtime Elite, a professional basketball league based in Atlanta that's opening another door to the pros for talented young players.

Now, he's trying to help a struggling Pistons team. The record for the longest losing streak within a single season is shared by the 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers, who both dropped 26 consecutive games. The 76ers also had a 28-game losing streak that started in the 2014-15 season and carried over to 2015-16.

"It's just a miserable existence," said NBA on TNT analyst Greg Anthony, who was a member of the 1995-96 Vancouver Grizzlies team that dropped 23 straight contests. "Your food doesn't taste as good. You don't sleep as well. There's a lot of stress and anxiety. It wears on you, because everybody in your world knows you're going through it."

"The city knows it, the country knows it, the entire league. You're the butt of

jokes. As a competitor, that is a really difficult experience to have to go through."

The Pistons (2-25), Wizards (4-22) and Spurs (4-21) may have scuffling in common. But not all rebuilds are the same. Detroit has an array of first-round talent, and the Spurs boast Wembanyama (he's averaging 19 points and 11 rebounds). Washington, meanwhile, is generating headlines as much for its moves off the court—possibly relocating out of the District of Columbia—as the mounting losses. On the floor, the Wizards are trying to build around Coulibaly, Jordan Poole and Kyle Kuzma, the veteran forward who won an NBA title with James and the Lakers.

Other single-digit win teams include Portland (6-19), Memphis (6-19, but Ja Morant returns Tuesday after a 25-game suspension) and Charlotte (7-18).

It's a race to the bottom right now, with Detroit in the driver's seat—and no Wembanyama awaiting in the 2024 draft.

"Your whole career, your whole life as an athlete, you're always in the mindset of winning," Anthony said. "And typically, most guys have been on good teams where if you

do certain things, well, you're going to have a chance to win. But when you get in those kinds of situations, where you don't have control over your own destiny in a specific game, that can really try you and challenge you, and everybody involved. It can just be a really ... poisonous existence."

The Pistons had all the signs of a team prepared to improve on their 17-65 mark from a season ago. Cunningham was back from shin surgery, they landed Thompson and Marcus Sasser in the most recent draft and had a year of growth from Jaden Ivey, the 2022 fifth overall pick out of Purdue. They also brought in veteran coach Monty Williams.

Instead, it's been loss after loss after loss after loss, etc.

"You talk to people that are around our team, they're not laughing, giggling and having a ball. They hate it," Williams recently said of the losing. "But when we show up in the gym the next day, the guys are wide-eyed. They're looking at me for answers. They come in and work hard."

"We've just hit an unbelievably tough stretch of basketball."

Anthony knows the feeling. He was once in the middle of an historical skid, too. This

after winning a national championship at UNLV. This after helping New York Knicks to the 1994 NBA Finals, where they lost in seven games to Hakeem Olajuwon and the Rockets. As part of the 1995 expansion draft, Anthony was picked by the Vancouver Grizzlies (now Memphis).

That first season, Anthony experienced a losing streak that started with a loss on Feb. 16, 1996, to Atlanta, and didn't end until the Grizzlies knocked off Kevin Garnett and the Minnesota Timberwolves on April 23.

"In a weird way, that was like winning a playoff game," Anthony recalled. "It was a really, really big deal. You can't even describe the relief that one feels having gone through that."

Wembanyama almost felt like the weight had been lifted when the Spurs saw their 18-game losing streak end with a win over LeBron James and the Lakers last Friday. On Sunday, though, they lost 146-110 to New Orleans.

The Spurs are young and bumps are part of the journey.

"It might explain it but it doesn't mean it's OK," Wembanyama said. "I mean, any team's goal is trying to be consistent. We're on our way. There are no excuses."

## WARRIORS 132, CELTICS 126, OT

**SAN FRANCISCO** (AP)—Stephen Curry swished a 3-pointer with 12 seconds left in overtime on the way to scoring 33, and the Golden State Warriors rallied past the Celtics to snap Boston's five-game winning streak.

Jonathan Kuminga made a steal and uncontested dunk to put the Warriors ahead in overtime then grabbed a key rebound on the other end that led to another scoring play, and Boston missed key chance after chance when it mattered most.

Jaylen Brown finished with 28 points for Boston, while Derrick White scored 30 in Boston's second loss in the last 10.

Jayson Tatum added 15 points, eight rebounds and seven assists as the Celtics began a four-game trip in California.

## TRAIL BLAZERS 109, SUNS 104

**PORTLAND, Ore.** (AP)—DeAndre Ayton had a double-double of 16 points and 15 rebounds, Anfernee Simons had 23 points and seven rebounds, and Portland erased a 22-point deficit to beat Phoenix and snap a seven-game losing streak.

The Suns lost for the fifth time in their last seven games. Phoenix's Kevin Durant led all scorers with 40 points in the loss while Devin Booker had 26 points and seven assists.

Jerami Grant also had 22 points for Portland, while Malcolm Brogdon had 14 points and four assists off the bench.

Portland was hot from the 3-point line all night, making 14 of 28 3-pointers to just five for Phoenix.

## BUCKS 132, SPURS 119

**MILWAUKEE** (AP)—Damian Lillard scored a season-high 40 points to push his career total over 20,000, Giannis Antetokounmpo had a career-high 16 assists, 14 rebounds and a season-low 11 points and Milwaukee trounced San Antonio.

The Spurs played without Victor Wembanyama, who sat out the game with a sore right ankle.

Lillard increased his career point total to 20,034 and became the 51st person in NBA history to reach 20,000 points.

Bobby Portis added 23 points and 10 rebounds, Khris Middleton scored 17 points and Brook Lopez had 14 points and six blocks for the Bucks.

Keldon Johnson had 28 points and 12 rebounds for the Spurs, while Zach Collins added 22 points and Devin Vassell had 17.



# McCutchen staying in Pittsburgh after agreeing to 1-year deal worth \$5M



**PITTSBURGH**  
(AP)—Andrew McCutchen isn't going anywhere.

The Pittsburgh Pirates star is remaining in his adopted hometown after agreeing to a one-year contract worth \$5 million, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday because it was not yet finalized.

The 37-year-old McCutchen returned to the Pirates last winter, reuniting with the club he starred from 2009-17, making five All-Star teams and winning the 2013 NL Most Valuable Player award. His arrival gave the rebuilding franchise a needed jolt even as McCutchen promised it wasn't a farewell tour.

It was not. McCutchen hit .256 with 12 home runs and 43 RBIs in 112 games while serving primarily as a designated hitter. He got his 2,000th hit in June and was sitting on 299 home runs in September when he partially tore his left Achilles tendon while legging out a double against Milwaukee.

McCutchen made it clear



Pittsburgh Pirates' Andrew McCutchen heads to first and celebrates his leadoff home run off Chicago Cubs pitcher Drew Smyly during the first inning of a baseball game Wednesday, June 14, 2023, in Chicago.

he intended to play in 2024 shortly after getting hurt, saying "it's not going to feel right anywhere else."

Pirates general manager Ben Cherington agreed.

"(His approach) has helped our lineup," Cherington said in September. "It's helped us and I don't see any particular reason why that can't continue."

McCutchen's days in the outfield are likely over. He played in right field for a handful of

games early in 2023 before exclusively moving to the designated hitter spot.

The Pirates benefited on the field and at the gate with McCutchen's familiar No. 22 back

in the fold during a season in which they went 76-86, a 15-game improvement over 2021. Pittsburgh averaged 20,131 fans at PNC Park last season, more than 4,500 more than the club averaged in 2022.

"Every time he came up to the plate it was kind of a different sound than (when) some other guys come up to the plate," Cherington said in September. "So I think in that sense it's obvious to all of us that it means something and hopefully there's a lot more good moments out there with him."

The Pirates believe they are nearing the end of the franchise-wide overhaul Cherington began when he took over four years ago. Pittsburgh has used the offseason to add several established players in recent days, bringing in veteran

left-handed starting pitchers Martín Pérez and Marco Gonzales and signing first baseman Rowdy Tellez.

"They're just a couple pieces away," Tellez said Monday. "I just want to be over there and help out in any way I can and just be a veteran guy that they can look to and talk to and be around and help them win as many games as I can."

Tellez and company will join a group that includes Gold Glove third baseman Ke'Bryan Hayes, outfielder Bryan Reynolds and shortstop Oneil Cruz, who missed almost all of last season with a left leg injury. The top overall pick in the 2023 draft, pitcher Paul Skenes could also get a long look during spring training and could be in the majors sooner rather than later.

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first with a time of 1:19:52. The pace was led by Keith Ketola who averaged 4:55/mile; Sil-drey Veloria, 5:59/mile; Tania Tan, 5:45/mile; Keith Longuski, 5:30/mile; and Heimanari Lai San, 6:30/mile.

In the youth division, Team Santa jingled their way to first place with a time of 1:25:13. The team consisted of team captain Andrei Chavez, Pony Tang,

Zhixiang Lin, Nolan Ngewakl and Markus Toves.

To sign up, click on the link below.

<https://raceroster.com/events/2023/82918/annual-christmas-island-relay-2023>

Robing Sapong, organizer of the event, said proceeds will go toward NMA's 2024 season and off-island events.

For any questions regarding the event, contact Robin Sapong at (670)788-0929 or email [rsapong@gmail.com](mailto:rsapong@gmail.com).

## MARIANAS

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chance of representing NMI in the FIBA Asia 3x3 Cup in Singapore next year.

There are currently 11 men's teams and five women's teams vying for the December 3x3 championship.

The series is open to any team whether they want to participate in the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup or not.

The entrance fee per team is \$300. The check must be payable to the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation.

For those who want to join the next series, to be eligible, a player:

- Must possess a U.S. passport not expiring within one year from March 2024.

- Must not have played for the national team in basketball and/or 3x3 for another country in an official FIBA competition of FIBA.

- Must be at least 18 years old by March 1, 2024, and

must turn 19 years old or older by the end of 2024.

- Must have participated in at least three FIBA 3x3 competitions.

### League format

- Maximum of 12 teams for men and eight for women.

- Single round robin/two pools (Pool A and Pool B).

- Knockout round: Top 4 teams advance from each pool for men and top two teams from each pool for women.

- All games will be played under FIBA 3x3 rules and regulations.

All teams will be given points at the end of each month with the following scoring system:

- 1st place - 50 points

- 2nd place - 40 points

- 3rd place - 30 points

- 4th place - 20 points

- All other teams - 10 points

For more information, call (670) 287-3103 or email [nmibasketballfederation@gmail.com](mailto:nmibasketballfederation@gmail.com).

## MEDALISTS

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The rest of the team's officials and coaches gift items and gift certificates worth \$100.

The incentives were presented to the athletes by NMSA's Tan, vice president Ray Tebuteb, secretary general Valerie Hofschneider, treasurer John Hirsh, board member John Davis, board member, and Team NMI chef de mission Nick Gross.

Along with them were the sponsors' representatives were Triple J's Mike Sablan, Joeten Dai Dai Foundation's Ray Alvarez, Crowne Plaza's Clayton Darlington, IT&E's Laarni Zapanta, and McDonald's Jewel Cubangbang.

The four gold medalists were put on the spot and made speeches after the presentation of their incentives.

High school senior Aleksenko went up first and said, "Congratulations to everybody who participated."

Santos thanked each of the sponsors, family, and friends, "who came out to support us."

Tudela, for her part, said, "Thank you all, especially our sponsors, and our family, friends, and supporters for this amazing opportunity—and everybody else who came along for this wild ride." She then asked the crowd, "Wasn't that such a trip?" to which everyone responded, "Yeah!" She then said, "Well, we made it and made it back in one piece, so, congrats everybody and thank you all."

Tania Tan wrapped up the impromptu medalists' speeches by saying, "These five gold medals are not only for us personally or our own federations, but for all us and everyone in the NMI, so thank you."

Team NMI competed in 10 sports over the 19 days of competition and placed 13th overall in the medal

tally with 13 medals.

Soccer had the most athletes and included Jerald Aquino, Anthony Bergancia, Dev Bachani, Casey Chambers, Mark Chavez, Mark Costales, Leland Deleon Guerrero, Ruben Guerrero, Akira Kadokura, Wataru Kadokura, Zhi Xiang Lin, Brian Lubao, Ariel Narvaez, Jonne Navarro, Nolan Ngewakl, Ronnel Ocanada, Daniell Pablo, Tyler Omelau, Cody Shimizu, Markus Toves, Merrick Toves, and Jireh Yobech, along with head coach Michiteru Mita, assistant coach Konomi Suzuki, team manager Jerishwin Angeles, assistant team manager Attao-Toves, kit manager Davy Laxa, and physical therapist Hazel Mabasa.

Va'a had the second most and consisted of Oliver Igisaiar, Tyler Andrew, Yu Chai, Terry Ruben, Willie Cabrera,

Mitchell Kukkun, Vinalynn Oronigo, Jenisha Dubrall, Ashley Pangelinan, Dayna Macaranas, Gracie Mendiola, Eva Weaver, Sakurako Halstead, Momoka Halstead, along with coach and athlete Jason Tarkong, assistant coach and athlete Richard Sikkell and team managers Justin Andrew and Joseph Weaver.

Swimming had 14 athletes including Andrew Nunez, Frances Raho, Isaiah Aleksenko, Juhn Tenorio, Julia Jinang, Kean Pajarillaga, Kevin Guerrero Jr., Kouki Watanabe, Maria Batallones, Michael Miller, Moshe Sikkell, Nagi Tenorio, Taiyo Akimaru, Shoko Litulumar, along with coaches Richard Sikkell and Hiroyuki Kimura and team manager Yuko Kimura.

Golf consisted of Joe "Kamikaze" Camacho, Joseph Samoto, Ben Jones Jr., Franco

Santos, Zhimin Jin, and team manager Marco Peter.

Athletics was made up of Tania Tan, Lyle Andrew, Maria Quitugua, Theodore Rodgers, Alexander Camacho, Casey Cruz, and Pony Tang along with team official Greg Iginioef.

Weightlifting included Angel San Nicolas, Joey Colisao, Antonette Labausa, Riella Ann Ichiuo, Leowell Cristobal, and Raymond Santos along with team manager Greg Borja.

Tennis was made up of Moris Villanueva, June Yu, Nason Wessel, and player/coach Colin Ramsey.

Beach volleyball included Andrew Johnson and Logan Mister, with coach Tyce Mister and manager Chris Nelson.

Bodybuilding was the duo of Davy Laxa and Christina Tudela; and triathlon's representative was Leo Wania.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Photos of athletes of each of the 10 sports that Team NMI competed in taken by Leigh Gases and by Pacific Games photographers during the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands are made into a collage for the Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



# 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner



LEIGH GASES  
Team NMI sponsor representatives from Triple J including Brad Ruszala, second left, and Mike Sablan, third right, pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night..



LEIGH GASES  
Team NMI sponsor representatives from Joeten Daidai Foundation, including Ray Alvarez, left, and IT&E's Laarni Zapanta, second right, pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



LEIGH GASES  
Members of the national women's va'a team pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



LEIGH GASES  
Interim Education commissioner Donna Flores, left, and guests, pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



LEIGH GASES  
From right, va'a official Joseph Weaver, va'a athlete/swim coach Richard Sikkel, va'a official Justin Andrew, and va'a team guest pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
From right, bodybuilding team coach Benji Maratita, Davy Laxa, Christina Tudela, and team media Leigh Gases pose for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



LEIGH GASES  
Bodybuilder and soccer kit manager Davy Laxa, right, pose with his daughter Dami, and girlfriend, Mia Carreon during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.



LEIGH GASES  
Northern Marianas Sports Associations' Nate Guerrero, Janelle Pangilinan, right, and Khristelle Itaas, left, take a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.





**Morant scores 34 in return from ban, hits buzzer-beater to lift Grizzlies over Pelicans.**

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# Saipan Tribune Sports

**McCutchen staying in Pittsburgh after agreeing to 1-year deal worth \$5M.**

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**20** THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

## 2023 PACIFIC GAMES APPRECIATION DINNER

# Medalists awarded cash incentives

By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER

The 2023 Pacific Games held in Honiara, Solomon Islands is now etched in the history books, and the CNMI thanked its team for their performance with a dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.

It was a dinner for all plus cash incentives given to medalists based on the medals they won.

In attendance were Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, interim Education commissioner Donna Flores, Northern Marianas Sport Association board president Jerry Tan and board members, representatives of the team's sponsors from Joeten Daidai Foundation, Triple J, Crowne Plaza Resort, IT&E, IP&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Mobil, Tan Holdings, and McDonald's of Guam & Saipan, each of the 10 sports federation's officials, and family and guests of the athletes.



Five gold medals were won by four athletes—two of which was won by athletics' Tania Tan in the 5,000m and 10,000m race, one by bodybuilder Christina Tudela for the Model Physique category, the first gold of the Games from NMI weightlifter Ray Santos in the snatch lift portion, and one for swimmer Isaiah Aleksenko for his 200m butterfly swim. Tan received \$4,000 for her two gold medals, while Tudela, Santos, and Aleksenko were each given \$2,000.

Santos also received \$1,000 for his silver medal and \$500 for his bronze medal.

Aleksenko won a bronze medal for an individual swim



LEIGH GASES

2023 Pacific Games gold medalists from left, Tania Tan, Christina Tudela, Isaiah Aleksenko, and Ray Santos pose with their medals and incentives during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.

## Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Dec. Series starts today

By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER

The NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 for December starts today, Dec. 21, with the championship set for Saturday, Dec. 23 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The first 3x3 series last November was won by Team Nesian Built, which

consists of Coby Santos, Douglas Schmidt, Preston Basa, and Jack Lizama. They bested 12 other teams and faced Hagu Real Hoops' Gerald Flores, Joseph Sablan, Shane Deleon Guerrero, and Elijah Aughenbaugh in the finals last Nov. 25.

November's undefeated Team Nesian Built has a



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Team Nesian Built's Coby Santos, Jack Lizama, Preston Basa, and Douglas Schmidt were the champions of the first Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Series last November at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

and also won two bronze medals in a team relay swim for a total of \$750. The other bronze medalists for the relay swim team, which included Taiyo Akimaru, Kian Pajarillaga, Juhn Tenorio, and Kouki Watanabe, received \$125 each.

Volleyball bronze medalists Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson split the \$500 incentive for \$250 each; and bodybuilding's Davy Laxa and weightlifting's Leowell Cristobal received \$500 each.

See MEDALISTS on Page 18



LEIGH GASES

Northern Marianas Sports Association board members along with Team NMI sponsor representatives on stage to hand out the 2023 Pacific Games medalists' incentives during the 2023 Pacific Games Team NMI appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Tuesday night.

## 42nd Annual Christmas Island Relay this Saturday

By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER



Run with friends and family as you celebrate the holiday season with the 42nd NMA Annual Christmas Island Relay this Saturday, Dec. 23.

The 13.1-mile long out-and-back course will be the same course from the Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon—from the Hyatt Regency Saipan to Marpi and back.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Run Saipan Alpha team runs to first place in the open division of the 41st NMA Christmas Island Relay last year.

The teams of five runners each will individually alternate through one-mile stages from start to finish.

Currently, there are 16 teams vying for first place. They are, This We'll Defend-Team Saipan, Power 5 Ladies, Yard of Beef, License to Chill, Team Santa Youth 2023, Team Santa Speedy 2023, Team Taflinger, #elfies, Saipan Swim Club, Agape Team 1, Agape Team 2, Agape Youth Team 1, Agape Youth Team 2, Team Dolphin, Don't Give Up Fifty's, and Normal Korean Boys.

Last year in the open division, Run Saipan Alpha finished

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